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Carità.

CHAPTER X.

THE SQUARE.



It was a rainy afternoon when Cara reached the Square. It had been settled, against Miss Cherry's will, that she was to go alone. The girl, who was often "queer," especially when anything connected with her natural home, her father's house, was in question, had requested that it should be so—and Miss Charity approved, to whose final decision everything was submitted at Sunninghill. "Don't interfere with her," Miss Charity had said; "she

is like her mother. She has a vein of caprice in her. You never could argue (if you remember) with poor Annie. You had either to give in to her, or to say no once for all, and stick to it. Carry is not like her mother all through—there are gleams of the Beresford in her. But there is a vein of caprice, and I wouldn't cross her, just at this crisis of her life."

"But I don't see why it should be such a crisis. It is a change of  
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scene, to be sure, and leaving us ought to be a trial," said Miss Cherry dubiously. The feeling within herself was, that she would have been glad had she been more sure that this was a trial. Girls were ungrateful in their lightheartedness, and sometimes loved the risks of independence. "It is not as if she were going among strangers," said Miss Cherry. "She is going to her home, and to her father."

"A father whom she has never known since she was a child—a house that has never lost the shadow of that dying!"

"Then why must not I go with her?" said Miss Cherry. The old lady shrugged her shoulders, but said no more. And Cara got her way. As she was to go alone, she was packed, with all her belongings, into the carriage; nurse going with her, who was to help in the housekeeping, and take care of the young mistress of the old familiar house. The railway, it is true, would have carried them there in half the time; but Cara liked the preparation of the long, silent drive, and it pleased the elder ladies that their darling should make her solitary journey so to her father's house. The road led through beautiful royal parks, more than one, and by glimpses of the pleasant river. It was like an old-fashioned expedition made in the days before railways, with full time for all the anticipations, all the dreams of what was to come. Though her mind was full of natural excitement and sadness, Cara could not help feeling herself like one of the heroines of Miss Austin's novels as she drove along. She had plenty of grave matters to think about, and was very much in earnest as to her life generally; yet, with the unconscious doubleness of youth, she could not help feeling only half herself, and half Elizabeth Burnet or Catherine Moreland going off into the world. And, indeed, without sharing the difficulties of these young ladies, Cara Beresford in her own person had no small problem before her. To fill the place of her mother, an accomplished woman, she who was only a girl; to make his home pleasant to her father: to set agoing once more something like family life. And she only seventeen, and so differently situated, she said to herself, from other girls! Had she not enough to think of? The trees and the bridges, the gleams of shining river, the great stretches of wooded country, all glided past her like things in a dream. It was they that were moving, not she. Nurse talked now and then; but nurse's talking did not disturb Cara; she knew by long experience just how to put in convenient ayes and noes, so as to keep the good woman going. And thus she went on, her head full of thoughts. Her difficulties were more grave than those which generally fall to the lot of so young a girl—but, nevertheless, with the frivolity of youth, she could feel herself something like Catherine Moreland, hurrying along to Northanger Abbey, and all the wonders and mysteries there.

She had expected to find her father already arrived and awaiting her; but he did not come until she had been an hour or two in the house—which was half a relief and half an offence to her. She was received with a kind of worship by John and cook, to whom their young mistress, whom

they had known only as a child, was a wonder and delight, and who mingled a greater degree of affectionate familiarity with the awe they ought to have felt for her than was quite consistent with Cara's dignity. They were anxious to pet and make much of her on her arrival—cook hurrying upstairs, unnecessarily Cara thought, to show how prettily her room had been prepared, and John bringing her tea, with cake and the daintiest bread and butter, and a broad smile of pleasure on his face. Cara thought it incumbent upon her to send away the cake and bread and butter, taking only the tea, to prove beyond all power of misconception that she was no longer a child—but she was sorry for it after, when John, protesting and horrified, had carried it away downstairs again. Still, though one is slightly hungry, it is best to keep up one's dignity, and "begin," as Aunt Cherry said, "as you meant to go on." Cara would not let herself be governed by old servants, that she had determined—and it was best to show them at once that this could not be.

Then she went up with some shrinking, feeling like a sea-bather making the first plunge, into the drawing-room, which no one had used for the last five years. She was obliged to confess that it was very pretty, notwithstanding that it frightened her. She half expected some one to rise from the chair before the first newly-lighted October fire to receive her as she went in. The little cabinets, the pretty brackets for the china, the scraps of old lace upon the velvet, the glimmer of old, dim, picturesque mirrors, the subdued yet brilliant colour in the bits of tapestry, all moved her to admiration. At Sunninghill they had, as became a ladies' house, many pretty things, but with as little idea of art as it is possible in the present day to succeed in having. Miss Cherry knew nothing of art, and it had been invented, Miss Charity thought, since her days, which was the time when people liked to have respectable solid furniture, and did not understand æsthetics. The graceful balance and harmony of this new old house gave Cara a new sensation of admiring pleasure—and yet she did not like it. It would be hard to tell what was the cause of the painful impression which prejudiced her mind—yet there it was. Her own mother—her dead mother—that visionary figure, half nurse, half goddess, which gives a quite visionary support and consolation to some motherless children, did not exist for Cara. She remembered how she had been sent off to the Hill when they went away to enjoy themselves, and how she had been sent off to the nursery when they sat talking to each other. It had been a happy home, and she had been petted and made much of by times—but this was what she recollected most clearly. And then there rose up before her, intensified by distance, that scene in her mother's room, which she had never confided to any one. She resented this mystery that was in the past, which returned and wrapped her in a kind of mist when she came back. Why had not her parents been straightforward people, with no mysteries such, as Cara said to herself, she hated! Why was there a skeleton in the cupboard? All the things she had read in books about this had made Cara angry, and

it vexed her to the heart to feel and know that there was one in her home. She had buried the secret so completely in her own bosom that it had made an aching spot all round it where it lay : like that bit of a garden which lies under a noxious shadow—like that bit of a field where a fire has been—was this place in her heart where her secret lay. She felt it, in all its force, when she came home. At the Hill there were no secrets ; they lived with their windows open and their hearts, fearing no sudden appearance, no discovery. But here it seemed that the old trouble had been waiting all these years, till the girl went back who alone knew all about it, the father's past and the mother's past ; and even the atmosphere of the long shut-up house felt pernicious. Cara did not like to look round her as it came to be dark, lest she see *some one* sitting in the corner in the shadow. It seemed to her more than once that somebody moved in the distance, going out or coming in, with a sweep of a long skirt, just disappearing as she looked up. This meant, I suppose (or at least so many people would say), that her digestion was not in such good order as it should have been—but digestion was not a thing which came within Cara's range of thought.

Her father arrived about half-past six by the Continental train. Cara stood at the door of the drawing-room, with her heart beating, wondering if she ought to run down and embrace him, or if he would come to her. She heard him ask if she had come, and then he added, "I will go to my room at once, John. I suppose dinner is nearly ready. I did not expect to have been so late. Bring my things to my room."

"Shall I call Miss Cara, sir?"

"No; never mind. I shall see her at dinner," he said.

And Cara instinctively closed the drawing-room door at which she had been standing, as she heard him begin to come up the stairs. She stood there, with her heart beating, in case he should call her ; but he did not. Then she too went to dress, with a chilled and stifled sensation, the first sense of repulse which she had ever experienced. When she was ready, she went back again very quickly and noiselessly, leaving the door open. By-and-by her father's step became audible coming down, and he paused when he got to the door ; but then resumed and went on again, sending her word that she would find him in the dining-room. It was unreasonable, the high swelling of offence and injured pride that she felt in her heart—but there it was. Was this how he meant to use her—her, his only child—now the mistress of his house? She went down, after an interval of proud and painful reluctance, a slim, girlish creature, in her white dress, her blue eyes somewhat strained and large, more widely opened than was consistent with perfect composure. She was not beautiful, like her mother. A certain visionary youthful severity was in her looks. She was different altogether, different in every way, from the pet and darling of the ladies at the Hill. Her father had not seen her since she had leaped into long dresses and young-womanhood, and he was startled by the change. Involuntarily, as he looked at her, her mother's description



of the child Cara came back to his mind. Perhaps he was all the more quick to notice this that his eye had been caught as he paused at the drawing-room door by the last purchase he had made in bric-a-brac, the Buen Retiro cup, of which his wife had said playfully that Cara would insist that he should tell the dealer the exact value before he bought it. This strange idea brought a half smile to his face, and yet his memories were so far from smiling. The cup had been broken to bits in the careless packing of that last journey home, when bric-a-brac had lost all interest in the gathering mists of suffering and despondency—and then afterwards, in an interval of apparent improvement, had been carefully put together and placed on a shelf, high up, where its imperfections were not visible. It was the sight of it which had kept Beresford from going into the room. He would have made the effort for Cara's sake, he thought, but that this relic, so connected with the last chapter of all, had thrust that recollection upon him. He had never entered poor Annie's drawing-room since the week she died.

"Well, Cara, my dear, I am glad to see you," he said, putting his arm round his daughter, and kissing her. "You must forgive me for not coming upstairs. How you have grown—or rather, you have become a young lady all at once. I don't know that you are much taller."

"No; I have not grown," said Cara. "I suppose the long dress makes a difference. It is that, perhaps."

"Yes," he said. "Sit down my dear; dinner waits. I have had a long journey, and I want something. I never eat much when I am travelling. I came by Dieppe, which is a route I detest. Ah, I forgot! You have never been across the Channel yet, Cara."

"No."

They both recollected why—and that "the next expedition" after those long honeymooning travels was to have been accompanied by "the child." Cara remembered this with a certain bitterness; her father merely with melancholy sentiment.

"Ah!" he said, vaguely, "we must mend that—some day. And how are the aunts? I can fancy that my sister looks just as she always did. She and I are at the age when people change little. But Aunt Charity? she is getting quite an old woman now—over seventy. Have you been dull in the country, Cara? or have they petted you so much that you will feel it dull to be here?"

He looked at her with a smile which lit up his face, and touched her heart just a little; but the question touched something else than her heart—her pride and sense of importance.

"I was not dull," she said. "One is not dull when one has something to do—and is with those whom one loves."

"Ah!" he said, looking at her with a little curiosity; "that is a better way of putting it, certainly," he added, with a smile.

Then there was a pause. John, behind Mr. Beresford's chair, who had been in the house when Cara was born, and who thought he knew

his master thoroughly, had much ado not to interfere, to whisper some instructions in her father's ear as to how a child like this should be dealt with, or to breathe into Cara's an entreaty that she would humour her papa. He said to his wife afterwards that to see them two sitting, pretending to eat their dinners, and never speaking, no more nor if they were wax images—or, when they did talk, talking like company—made him that he didn't know whether he was standing on his head or his heels. How many hints our servants could give us if decorum permitted their interference! John felt himself a true friend of both parties, anxious to bring them as near to each other as they ought to be; but he knew that it would have been as much as his place was worth had he ventured to say anything. So he stood regretfully, wistfully, behind backs and looked on. If he could but have caught Miss Carry's eye! but he did not, not even when, in the confusion of his feelings, he offered her mustard instead of sugar with her pudding. Her feelings were so confused also that she never noticed the mistake. Thus the dinner passed with nothing but the sparsest company conversation. There were but these two in the world of their immediate family; therefore they had no safe neutral ground of brothers and sisters to talk about.

"Is your room comfortable?" Mr. Beresford said, when they had got through a comfortless meal. "If I had been here sooner, I should have refurnished it; but you must do it yourself, Cara, and please your own taste."

"I don't think I have any taste," she said.

"Ah, well—perhaps it does not matter much; but the things that pleased you at ten will scarcely please you at seventeen. Seventeen are you? and *out*, I suppose? One might have been sure of that. Cherry would have no peace till she had you to go to parties with her."

"We very rarely go to parties," said Cara, with dignity. "Of course at seventeen one is grown-up. One does not require parties to prove *that*."

He looked at her again, and this time laughed. "I am afraid you are very positive and very decided," he said. "I don't think it is necessary, my dear, to be so sure of everything. You must not think I am finding fault."

Her heart swelled—what else could she think? She did not wish, however, to appear angry, which evidently was impolitic, but shifted the subject to her father's recent travels, on which there was much to be said. "Are you going to the geographical meeting? Are they to have one expressly for you, like last year?" she said, not without a hidden meaning, of which he was conscious in spite of himself.

"You know what they said last year? Of course there was no reason for it; for I am not an explorer, and discovered nothing; but how could I help it? No; there will be no meeting this time, thank heaven."

And he saw that a faint little smile came upon Cara's lips. Instead

of being delighted to see that her father had come to such honour, this little creature had thought it humbug. So it was—but it galled him to know that his daughter felt it to be so. Had she laughed out, and given him an account of the scene at the Hill; how Aunt Cherry had read the account out of the papers with such joy and pleasure; and Aunt Charity had wiped her spectacles and taken the paper herself to read the record of his valiant deeds—the little family joke would have drawn them together, even if it had been half at his expense. But no man likes to feel that his claims to honour are judged coolly by his immediate belongings, and the little remark wounded him. This, he said to himself, was not the sort of sweet girl who would make the house once more a home to him. He let her go upstairs without saying anything of his further intentions for the evening. And Cara felt that she had been unsuccessful in the key-note she had struck; though without blaming herself seriously, for, after all, it was he and not she who ought to have struck this key-note. She went upstairs in a little flutter of dissatisfaction with herself and him. But, as soon as she had got upstairs, Cara, with true feminine instinct, began to make little overtures of reconciliation. She went round the room to see what could be done to make it more homelike. She lighted the candles on the mantelpiece, and placed some books uppermost on the table, about which she could talk to him. She was not fond of work in her own person, but she had read in good story-books that needlework was one of the accessories to an ideal scene of domesticity—therefore, she hunted up a piece of work and an oft-mislaid case with thimble and scissors, and placed them ready on a little table. Then she called John, softly, as he went upstairs, to ask him if her father took tea, or rather when he took tea, the possibility of leaving out that ceremonial altogether not having occurred to her.

"If you please, miss," said John, with a deprecating air, "master has had his cup of coffee, and he's gone out. I think he ain't gone no further than next door; and I'll make bold to say as he'll be back—soon," said John.

Cara went back to her chair, without a word—her heart beat high—her face grew crimson in spite of herself. She retreated to her seat and took up a book, and began to read at a furious pace. She did not very well know what it was about, but she had read a long chapter before John, going downstairs and then coming up again in a middle-aged, respectable butler's leisurely way, could place the little tea-tray on the table near her. There was but one cup. It was evident that she was expected to take this refreshment alone. She gave a little good-humoured nod at the man as he looked round with the comprehensive glance of his class, to see if anything wanted removal—and went on reading. The book was about unconscious cerebration, and other not highly intelligible things. Some of the phrases in it got entangled, like the straws and floating rubbish on a stream, with the touch of wild commotion in her mind, and so lived in her after this mood and a great many others had

passed away. She went on reading till she had heard John go down, and reach his own regions at the bottom of the stairs. Then she put the book down, and looked up, as if to meet the look of some one else who would understand her. Poor child! and there was no one there.

This was Cara's first night in the Square.

#### CHAPTER XI.

##### MRS. MEREDITH.

IT was Mrs. Meredith who lived next door—an old friend, who was the only person Mrs. Beresford had permitted to come and see her when she returned ill, and of whom Miss Cherry had felt with confidence that Cara would find a friend in her. She had lived there almost ever since Cara was born, with her two sons, boys a little older than Cara; a pretty gentle woman, “not clever,” her friends said—“silly,” according to some critics, of whom poor Annie Beresford had been one—but very popular everywhere and pleasant; a woman whom most people were glad to know. It would be hard to say exactly in what her charm lay. There were handsomer women than she to be met with by the score who were much less beloved—and as for her mind, it scarcely counted at all in the estimate of her merits. But she was kind, sympathetic, sweet-mannered—affectionate and caressing when it was becoming to be so—smiling and friendly everywhere. Great talkers liked her, for she would listen to them as if she enjoyed it; and silent people liked her, for she did not look bored by their side, but would make a little play of little phrases, till they felt themselves actually amusing. She had very sweet liquid brown eyes—not too bright or penetrating, but sympathetic always—and a soft, pretty, white hand. She was not young, nor did she look younger than she was; but her sympathies flowed so readily, and her looks were so friendly that she belonged to the younger part of the world always by natural right. Her boys were her chief thought and occupation. One of them was six, one four years older than Cara; so that Oswald was three-and-twenty and Edward on the eve of his majority when the girl arrived at her father's house. Mrs. Meredith's perpetual occupation with these boys, her happiness in their holiday times, her melancholy when they went to school, had kept her friends interested for a number of years. Men who breathed sighs of relief when the terrible period of the holidays came to an end, and their own schoolboys were got rid of, put on soft looks of pity when they heard that Oswald and Edward were gone too; and mothers who were themselves too thankful that no drownings or shootings, not even a broken collar-bone or a sprained ankle, had marked the blissful vacations in their own house, half cried with Mrs. Meredith over the silence of hers “when the boys were away.” They came and carried her off to family dinners, and made little parties to keep her from feeling it; as if there had been no boys in the world but those

two. "For you know her circumstances are so peculiar," her friends said. The peculiarity of her circumstances consisted in this, that though she had lived alone for these fifteen years in the Square, she was not a widow—neither was she a separated or in any way blameable wife. All that could be said was that the circumstances were very peculiar. She who was so sweet, whom everybody liked, did not somehow "get on" with her husband. "'Abody likes me but my man," said a Scotch fisherwoman in a similar position. Mrs. Meredith did not commit herself even to so terse a description. She said nothing at all about it. Mr. Meredith was in India—though whether he had always been there, or had judiciously retired to that wide place, in consequence of his inability to get on with the most universally-liked of women, it was not generally known. But there he was. He had been known to come home twice within the fifteen years, and had paid a visit at the Square among other visits he had paid—and his wife's friends had found no particular objections to him. But he had gone back again, and she had remained, placidly living her independent life. She was well off. Her boys were at Harrow first, and then at the University, where Edward still was disporting himself; though he had just got through his examination for the Indian Civil Service, and had more practical work in prospect. Oswald, who had ended his career at Oxford, was living at home; but even the grown-up son in the house had not removed any of her popularity. She had a perpetual levée every afternoon. Not a morning passed that two or three ladies did not rush in, in the sacred hours before luncheon, when nobody is out, to tell her or ask her about something; and the husbands would drop in on their way from business, from their offices or clubs, just for ten minutes before they went home. This was how her life was spent—and though sometimes she would speak of that life despondently, as one passed under a perpetual shadow, yet, in fact, it was a very pleasant, entertaining, genial life. To be sure, had she been passionately attached to the absent Mr. Meredith, she might have found drawbacks in it; but, according to appearances, this was scarcely the case, and perhaps never had been.

This lady was the first visitor Cara had in the Square. She came in next morning, about twelve o'clock, when the girl was languidly wondering what was to become of her. Cara had not spent a cheerful morning. Her father had come to breakfast, and had talked to her a little about ordinary matters, and things that were in the newspaper. He was as much puzzled as a man could be what to do with this seventeen-year old girl whom he had sent for, as a matter of course, when he himself came home to settle, but whom now he found likely to be an interruption to all his habits. He did not know Cara, and was somehow uneasy in her presence, feeling in her a suspicion and distrust of himself which he could by no means account for. And Cara did not know him, except that she did distrust and suspect him, yet expected something from him, she could not tell what; something better than the talk about collisions and ship-

wrecks in the papers. She tried to respond, and the breakfast was not a sullen or silent meal. But what a contrast it was from the bright table at the Hill, with the windows open to the lawn, and all the spontaneous happy talk, which was not made up for any one, but flowed naturally, like the air they breathed! Mr. Beresford was much more accomplished than Aunt Cherry; a clever man, instead of the mild old maiden whom everybody smiled at, but — All this went through Cara's mind as she poured out his coffee, and listened to his account of the new steam-boat. There was a perfect ferment of thought going on in her brain while she sat opposite to him, saying yes and no, and now and then asking a question, by way of showing a little interest. She was asking herself how things would have been if her mother had lived; how they would have talked then: whether they would have admitted her to any share in the talk, or kept her outside, as they had done when she was a child? All these questions were jostling each other in her mind, and misty scenes rising before her, one confusing and mixing up with the other—the same breakfast-table, as she remembered it of old, when the father and mother in their talk would sometimes not hear her questions, and sometimes say, "Don't tease, child," and sometimes bid her run away to the nursery; and as it might have been with her mother still sitting by, and herself a silent third person. Mr. Beresford had not a notion what the thoughts were which were going on under Cara's pretty hair, so smoothly wound about her head, and shining in the autumn sunshine, and under the pretty dark blue morning dress which "threw up," as Cherry meant it to do, the girl's whiteness and brightness. She could make *him* out to some degree, only putting more meaning in him than he was himself at all aware of; but he could not make out her. Did thought dwell at all in such well-shaped little heads, under hair so carefully coiled and twisted? He did not know, and could no more divine her than if she had been the Sphinx in person; but Cara, if she went wrong, did so by putting too much meaning into him.

When breakfast was over, he rose up, still holding his paper in his hand. "I am afraid you will feel the want of your usual occupations," he said. "Lessons are over for you, I suppose? It is very early to give up education. Are you reading anything? You must let me know what you have been doing, and if I can help you."

How helpless he looked standing there, inspecting her; but he did not look so helpless as he felt. How was he, a man who had never done any of life's ordinary duties, to take the supervision of a girl into his hands? If she had been a boy, he might have set her down by his side (the confusion of pronouns is inevitable) to work at Greek—a Greek play, for instance, which is always useful; but he supposed music and needlework would be what she was thinking of. No; if she had been a boy, he would have done better than take her to his study and set her down to a Greek play; he could have sent her to the University, like Edward Meredith, like every properly educated young man. But a girl



of seventeen, he had always understood, was of an age to take the control of her father's house—was “out”—a being to be taken into society, to sit at the head of his table (though rather young); and the idea that she might require occupation or instruction between the moments of discharging these necessary duties had not occurred to him. It did now, however, quite suddenly. What was she going to do? When he went into his library, she would go to the drawing-room. Would she take her needle-work? would she go to the long disused piano? What would the young strange female creature do?

“Thank you, papa,” said Cara, which was of all others the most bewildering reply she could have given him. He gazed at her again, and then went away in his utter helplessness.

“You will find me in the library, if you want me,” he said aloud. But in himself he said, with more confidence, “Mrs. Meredith will know;” or rather, perhaps, if the truth must be said, he thought, “*She* will know. She will see at once what ought to be done. She will tell me all about it to-night!” And with this consolation he went into his library and betook himself to his important morning's work. He had to verify a quotation, which he thought had been wrongly used in his friend Mr. Fortis' book about Africa. He had to write to one or two Fellows of his pet Society, about a series of lectures on an interesting point of comparative science, which he thought the great authority on the subject might be persuaded to give. He had to write to Mr. Sienna Brown about a Titian which had been repainted and very much injured, and about which he had been asked to give his opinion by the noble proprietor, whom he had met on his return home. It will be perceived that it would have been a serious disadvantage to public interests had Mr. Beresford been required to withdraw his thoughts from such important matters, and occupy them with the education of an unremarkable girl.

And Cara went upstairs. She had already seen cook, who had kindly told her what she thought would be “very nice” for dinner, and had agreed humbly; but had not, perhaps, been quite so humble when cook entreated “Miss Cara, dear,” with the confidence of an old servant, not to be frightened, and assured her that she'd soon get to know her papa's ways.

When she got to the drawing-room, she went first to the windows and looked out, and thought that a few more plants in the balcony would be an advantage, and recollected how she used to play in the Square, and gave a sidelong glance at the railings of next door, wondering whether “the boys” were at home, and if they had changed. Then she came in, and went to the fire, and looked at herself and the big silent room behind her in the great mirror on the mantelpiece. Cara was not vain—it was not to see how she looked that she gazed wistfully into that reflection of the room in which she was standing, so rich and full with all its pictures, its china, its tapestries and decorations confronting her like a picture, with one lonely little girl in it, in a dark blue dress and white collar, and big, sad, strained blue eyes. What a forlorn little thing that girl seemed!

nobody to interchange looks with even, except herself in the glass; and the room so crowded with still life, so destitute of everything else: so rich, so warm, so beautiful, so poor, so destitute, so lonely! What was she to do with herself for the long, solitary day? She could not go out, unless she went with nurse, as she used to do when she was a child. She was an open-air girl, loving freedom, and had been used to roam about as she pleased in the sweet woods about the Hill. You may imagine how lost the poor child felt herself in those stony regions round the Square.

And it was just then that Mrs. Meredith arrived. She came in, rustling in her pretty rich silk gown, which was dark blue too, like Cara's. She came and took the girl into her kind arms and kissed her. "If I had known when you were coming yesterday, I should have been here to receive you," she said; "my poor, dear child, coming back all by yourself! Why did not Aunt Cherry come with you, to get you a little used to it before you were left alone?"

"We thought it was best," said Cara, feeling all at once that she had brought the greatest part of her troubles on herself. "We thought papa would like it best."

"Now, my dear," said Mrs. Meredith, giving her a kiss, and then shaking a pretty finger at her, "you must not begin by making a bugbear of papa. What he wishes is that you should be happy. Don't look sad, my darling. Ah, yes, I know it is a trial coming back here. It is a trial to me even," said Mrs. Meredith, looking round and drying her soft eyes, "to come into your poor mamma's room, and see everything as she left it; and think what a trial it must be to *him*, Cara?"

"He has never been here," said the girl, half melted, half resisting.

"Poor soul!" said Mrs. Meredith. "Poor man! Oh, Cara! if it be hard for you, think what it is for him! You are only a child, and you have all your life before you, you dear young happy thing."

"I am not so very happy."

"For the moment, my darling; but wait a little, wait," said the kind woman, her eyes lighting up—"till the boys come home. There you see what a foolish woman I am, Cara. I think everything mends when the boys come home. I ought to say when Edward comes home, to be sure, for I have Oswald with me now. But Edward always was your friend; don't you remember? Oswald was older; and it makes a great difference somehow when they are men. A man and a boy are two different things; and it is the boy that I like the best. But I have been so calculating upon you, my dear. You must run in half-a-dozen times a day. You must send for me whenever you want me. You must walk with me when I go out. I have no daughter, Cara, and you have no mother. Come, darling, shall it be a bargain?"

The tears were in this sweet woman's eyes, whom everybody loved. Perhaps she did not mean every word she said—who does? but there was a general truth of feeling in it all, that kept her right. Cara ran straight into her arms, and cried upon her shoulder. Perhaps because

she was frightened and distrustful in other particulars of her life, she was utterly believing here. Here was the ideal for which she had looked—a friend, who yet should be something more than a friend; more tender than Cara could remember her mother to have been, yet something like what an ideal mother, a mother of the imagination, would be. Sweet looks, still beautiful, the girl thought in the enthusiasm of her age, yet something subdued and mild with experience—an authority, a knowledge, a power which no contemporary could have. Cara abandoned herself in utter and total forgetfulness of all prejudices, resistances, and doubts, to this new influence. Her mother's friend, the boys' mother, who had been her own playmates, and about whom now she was so curious, without knowing it—her nearest neighbour, her natural succour, a daughterless woman, while she was a motherless girl. Happiness seemed to come back to her with a leap "I shall not mind anything if I may always come to you, and ask you about anything," she said.

"And of course you must do that. Did not Cherry tell you so? I thought Cherry would have been faithful to me. Ah! she did? then I am happy, dear; for if I have one weakness more than another it is that my friends should not give me up. But Cherry should have come with you," said Mrs. Meredith, shaking her head.

"It was all for papa——"

"But that is what I find fault with—papa's only daughter, only child, thinking for a moment that her happiness was not what he wanted most."

Cara drooped her guilty head. She was guilty; yes, she did not deny it, but probably this goddess-woman, this ideal aid and succour, did not know how little in the happier days had been thought of Cara. She had always thought of "the boys" first of all; but then Mr. Meredith—Cara had an odd sort of recollection somehow that Mr. Meredith was not first, and that perhaps this might account for the other differences. So she did not say anything, but sat down on a stool at her new-old friend's feet, and felt that the strange, rich, beautiful room had become home.

"Now I never could do anything like this," said Mrs. Meredith, looking round. "I am fond of china too; but I never know what is good and what is bad; and sometimes I will see your papa take down a bit which I think beautiful, and look at it with such a face. How is one to know," she said, laughing merrily, "if one is not clever? I got the book with all the marks in it, but, my dear child, I never recollect one of them; and then such quantities of pretty china is never marked at all. Ah, I can understand why he doesn't come here. I think I would make little changes, Cara. Take down that, for instance"—and she pointed at random to the range of velvet-covered shelves, on the apex of which stood the Buen Retiro cup—"and put a picture in its place. Confuse him by a few changes. Now stop: is he in? I think we might do it at once, and then we could have him up."

Cara shrank perceptibly. She drew herself a little away from the

stranger's side. "You are frightened for him," cried Mrs. Meredith, with a soft laugh. "Now, Cara, Cara, this is exactly what I tell you must not be. You don't know how good and gentle he is. I can talk to him of anything—even my servants, if I am in trouble with them; and every woman in London, who is not an angel, is in trouble with her servants from time to time. Last time my cook left me—— Why, there is nothing," said Mrs. Meredith, reflectively, "of which I could not talk to your papa. He is kindness itself."

This was meant to be very reassuring, but somehow it did not please Cara. A half resentment (not so distinct as that) came into her mind that her father, who surely belonged to her, rather than to any other person on the face of the earth, should be thus explained to her and recommended. The feeling was natural, but painful, and somewhat absurd, for there could be no doubt that she did not know him, and apparently Mrs. Meredith did; and what she said was wise; only somehow it jarred upon Cara, who was sensitive all over, and felt every touch, now here, now there.

"Well, my dear, never mind, if you don't like it, for to-day; but the longer it is put off the more difficult it will be. Whatever is to be done ought to be done at once I always think. He should not have taken a panic about this room; why should he? Poor dear Annie! everything she loved ought to be dear to him; that would be my feeling. And Cara, dear, you might do a great deal; you might remove this superstition for ever, for I do think it is superstition. However, if you wish me to say no more about it, I will hold my tongue. And now what shall we do to-day? Shall we go out after luncheon? As soon as you have given your papa his lunch, you shall put on your things, and I will call for you. My people never begin to come before four; and you shall come in with me and see them. That will amuse you, for there are all sorts of people. And your papa and you are going to dine with us; I told him last night you must come. You will see Oswald and renew your acquaintance with him, and we can talk. Oswald is very good-looking, Cara. Do you remember him? Fine dark hair and dark eyes; but I wish he had always remained a boy; though of course that is not possible," she said, shaking her head with a sigh. "Now I must run away, and get through my morning's work. No, don't disturb your papa; evening is his time. I shall see him in the evening. But be sure you are ready to go out at half-past two."

How little time there seemed to be for moping or thinking after this visit! Cara made a rapid survey of the drawing-room when she returned to it, to see what changes could be made, as her friend suggested. She would not have had the courage to do any such thing, had it not been suggested to her. It was her father's room, not hers; and what right had she to meddle? But somewhat a different light seemed to have entered with her visitor. Cara saw, too, when she examined, that changes could be made which would make everything different, yet

leave everything fundamentally the same. Her heart fluttered a little at the thought of such daring. She might have taken such a thing upon her at the Hill, without thinking whether or not she had a right to do it; but then she never could have had time to move anything without Miss Charity or Miss Cherry coming in, in the constant cheery intercourse of the house. But for these changes she would have abundant time; no one would come to inspect while her re-arrangements were going on. However there was no time to think of them now; the day was busy and full. She came downstairs for luncheon with her bonnet on, that she might not be too late. "I am going out with Mrs. Meredith," she said to her father, in explanation of her out-of-door costume.

"Ah, that is right," he said. "And we are to dine there this evening." Even he looked brighter and more genial when he said this. And the languid day had grown warm and bright, full of occupations and interest, even of luxury; for to keep Mrs. Meredith *waiting*—to be too late—that would never do!

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR.

MRS. MEREDITH'S drawing-room was not like the twin room next door. It was more ornate, though not nearly so beautiful. The three windows were draped in long misty white curtains, which veiled the light even at its brightest and made a curious artificial semblance of mystery and retirement on this autumn afternoon, when the red sunshine glowed outside. Long looking-glasses here and there reflected these veiled lights. There was a good deal of gilding, and florid furniture, which insisted on being looked at. Cara sat down on an ottoman close to the further window after their walk, while Mrs. Meredith went to take off her bonnet. She wanted to see the people arrive, and was a little curious about them. There were, for a country house, a good many visitors at the Hill, but they came irregularly and sometimes it would happen that for days together not a soul would appear. But Mrs. Meredith had no more doubt of the arrival of her friends than if they had all been invited guests. Cara was still seated alone, looking out, her pretty profile relieved against the white curtain like a delicate little cameo, when the first visitor arrived, who was a lady, and showed some annoyance to find the room already occupied. "I thought I must be the first," she said, giving the familiar salutation of a kiss to Mrs. Meredith as she entered. "Never mind, it is only Cara Beresford," said that lady, and led her friend by the hand to where two chairs were placed at the corner of the fire. Here they sat and talked in low tones with great animation, the "he says" and "she says" being almost all that reached Cara's ear, who, though a little excited by the expectation of "company," did not understand this odd version of it. By and by, however, the lady came across to her and began to talk, and Cara saw that some one else had arrived. The room filled gradually after this, two

or three people coming and going, each of them in their turn receiving a few minutes' particular audience. Nothing could be more evident than that it was to see the lady of the house that these people came; for though the visitors generally knew each other, there was not much general conversation. Every new comer directed his or her glance to Mrs. Meredith's corner, and if the previous audience was not concluded relapsed into a corner, and talked a little to the next person, whoever that might be. In this way Cara received various points of enlightenment as to this new society. Most of them had just returned to town. They talked of Switzerland, they talked of Scotland; of meeting So-and-so here and there; of this one who was going to be married, and that one who was supposed to be dying; but all this talk was subsidiary to the grand object of the visit, which was the personal interview. Cara, though she was too young to relish her own spectator position, could not help being interested by the way in which her friend received her guests. She had a different aspect for each. The present one, as Cara saw looking up, after an interval, was a man, with whom Mrs. Meredith was standing in front of the furthest window. She was looking up in his face, with her eyes full of interest, not saying much; listening with her whole mind and power, every fold in her dress, every line of her hair and features, falling in with the sentiment of attention. Instead of talking, she assented with little nods of her head and soft acquiescent or remonstrative movements of her delicate hands, which were lightly clasped together. This was not at all her attitude with the ladies, whom she placed beside her, in one of the low chairs, with little caressing touches and smiles and low-voiced talk. How curious it was to watch them one by one! Cara felt a strong desire, too, to have something to tell; to go and make her confession or say her say upon some matter interesting enough to call forth that sympathetic, absorbed look—the soft touch upon her shoulder, or half embrace.

It was tolerably late when the visitors went away—half-past six, within an hour of dinner. The ladies were the last to go, as they had been the first to come, and Cara, relieved by the departure of the almost last stranger, drew timidly near the fire, when Mrs. Meredith called her. It was only as she approached—and the girl felt cold, sitting so far off and being so secondary, which is a thing that makes everybody chilly—that she perceived somebody remaining, a gentleman seated in an easy-chair—an old gentleman (according to Cara; he was not of that opinion himself), who had kept his place calmly for a long time without budging, whosoever went or came.

"Well, you have got through the heavy work," said this patient visitor, "and I hope you have sent them off happier. It has not been your fault, I am sure, if they are not happier; they have each had their audience and their appropriate word."

"You always laugh at me, Mr. Somerville: why should not I say what I think they will like best to the people who come to see me?"



"Ah, when you put it like that," he said, "certainly, why shouldn't you? But I think some of those good people thought that you gave them beautiful advice and consolation, didn't you? I thought it seemed like that as I looked on."

"You are always so severe. Come, my darling, you are out of sight there, come and smooth down this mentor of mine by the sight of your young face. This is my neighbour's child, Miss Beresford, from next door."

"Ah, *the neighbour!*" said Mr. Somerville, with a slight emphasis, and then he got up somewhat stiffly and made Cara his bow. "Does not he come for his daily bread like the rest?" he said in an undertone.

"Mr. Beresford is going to dine with me to-night, with Cara, who has just come home," said Mrs. Meredith, with a slight shade of embarrassment on her face.

"Ah, from school?" said this disagreeable old man.

It had grown dark, and the lady herself had lighted the candles on the mantelpiece. He was sitting immediately under a little group of lights in a florid branched candlestick, which threw a glow upon his baldness. Cara, unfavourably disposed, thought there was a sneer instead of a smile upon his face, which was partially in shade.

"I have never been to school," said the girl, unreasonably angry at the imputation; and just then some one else came in—another gentleman, with whom Mrs. Meredith, who had advanced to meet him, lingered near the door. Mr. Somerville watched over Cara's head, and certainly his smile had more amusement than benevolence in it.

"Ah!" he said again, "then you miss the delight of feeling free: no girl who has not been at school can understand the pleasure of not being at school any longer. Where have you been, then, while your father has been away?"

"With my aunts, at Sunninghill," said Cara, unnecessarily communicative, as is the habit of youth.

"Ah, yes, with your aunts. I used to know some of your family. Look at her now," said the critic, more to himself than to Cara—"this is a new phase. This one she is smoothing down."

Cara could not help a furtive glance. The new comer had said something, she could not hear what, and stood half-defiant at the door. Mrs. Meredith's smile spoke volumes. She held out her hand with a deprecating, conciliatory look. They could not hear what she said, but the low tone, the soft aspect, the extended hand, were full of meaning. The old gentleman burst into a broken, hoarse laugh. It was because the new-comer, melting all at once, took the lady's hand and bowed low over it, as if performing an act of homage. Mr. Somerville laughed, but the stranger did not hear.

"This is a great deal too instructive for you," he said. "Come and tell me about your aunts. You think me quite an old man, eh? and I think you quite a little girl."

"I am not so young! I am seventeen."

"Well! And I am seven-and-fifty—not old at all—a spruce and spry bachelor, quite ready to make love to any one; but such are the erroneous ideas we entertain of each other. Have you known Mrs. Meredith a long time? or is this your first acquaintance?"

"Oh, a very long time—almost since ever I was born."

"And I have known her nearly twenty years longer than that. Are you very fond of her? Yes, most people are. So is your father, I suppose, like the rest. But now you are the mistress of the house, eh? you should not let your natural-born subjects stray out of your kingdom o' nights."

"I have not any kingdom," said Cara, mournfully. "The house is so sad. I should like to change it if papa would consent."

"That would be very good," said the volunteer counsellor, with alacrity. "You could not do anything better, and I daresay he will do it if you say so. A man has a great deal of tenderness for his wife's only child when he has lost her. You have your own love and the other too."

"Have I?" said the girl, wistfully. Then she remembered that to talk of her private affairs and household circumstances with a stranger was a wonderful dereliction of duty. She made herself quite stiff accordingly in obedience to propriety, and changed her tone.

"Is not Oswald at home?" she said. "I thought I should be sure to see him."

"Oswald is at home, but he keeps away at this hour. He overdoes it, I think; but sons like to have their mothers to themselves; I don't think they like her to have such troops of friends. And Oswald, you know, is a man, and would like to be master."

"He has no right to be master!" said Cara, the colour rising on her cheeks. "Why should not she have her friends?"

"That is exactly what I tell him; but most likely he will understand you better. He is not my ideal of a young man; so you have no call to be angry with me on account of Oswald."

"I—angry with—you; when I don't know you—when I never saw you before! I beg your pardon," cried Cara, fearing that perhaps this might sound rude; but if it was rude it was true.

"Must you go?" said Mrs. Meredith to her visitor. "Well, I will not delay you, for it is late; but that is all over, is it not? I cannot afford to be misunderstood by any one I care for. Won't you say 'How d'ye do?' to Mr. Somerville, my old friend, whom you see always, and Miss Beresford, my young friend, whom you have never seen before?"

"I have not time, indeed," said the stranger, with a vague bow towards the fireplace; "but I go away happy—it is all over, indeed. I shall know better than ever to listen to detractors and mischief-makers again."

"That is right," she said, giving him her hand once more. When

he was gone she turned back with a little air of fatigue. "Somebody had persuaded that foolish boy that I thought him a bore. He is not a bore—except now and then; but he is too young," said Mrs. Meredith, shaking her head. "You young people are so exigent, Cara. You want always to be first, and in friendship that, you know, is impossible. All are equal on that ground."

"I am glad you have a lesson now and then," said Mr. Somerville. "You know my opinion on that subject."

"Are you going to dine with us, dear Mr. Somerville?" said Mrs. Meredith sweetly, looking at her watch. "Do. You know Mr. Beresford is coming, who is very fine company indeed. No? I am so sorry. It would be so much more amusing for him, not to speak of Cara and me."

"I am very sorry I can't amuse you to-night," he said, getting to his feet more briskly than Cara expected. Mrs. Meredith laughed; and there was a certain sound of hostility in the laugh, as though she was glad of the little prick she had bestowed.

"Cara, you must run and dress," she said; "not any toilette to speak of, dear. There will only be your father and Oswald; but you must be quick, for we have been kept very late this evening. I wonder you can resist that young face," she said, as Cara went away. "You are fond of youth, I know."

"I am not fond of affording amusement," he said. He limped slightly as he walked, which was the reason he had allowed Cara to go before him. "Yes, I like youth. Generally it makes few phrases, and it knows what it means."

"Which is just what I dislike."

"Yes, elderly sirens naturally do. But next time Beresford comes to dine, and you ask me, if you will give me a little longer notice I will come, for I want to meet him."

"Let it be on Saturday, then," she said; "that is, if he has no engagement. I will let you know."

"As if she did not know what engagements he had!" Mr. Somerville said to himself: "as if he ever dreamt of going anywhere that would interfere with his visits here!" He struck his stick sharply against the stairs as he went down. He had no sense of hostility to Mrs. Meredith, but rather that kind of uneasy liking akin to repugnance, which made him wish to annoy her. He felt sure she was made angry by the sound of his stick on the stairs. Her household went upon velvet, and made no noise, for though she was not fanciful she had nerves, and was made to start and jump by any sudden noise.

Cara heard him go with his stick along the Square, as nurse, who was her maid, closed the windows of her room. The sound got less distinct after this, but still she could hear it gradually disappearing. What a disagreeable old man he was, though he said he did not think himself old; at seven-and-fifty! Cara thought seven-and-twenty oldish, and seven-and-

thirty the age of a grandfather, and yet he did not think himself old ! So strange are the delusions which impartial people have to encounter in this world. Nurse interrupted her thoughts by a question about her dress. One of her very prettiest evening dresses lay opened out upon her bed.

"That is too fine," said Cara; "we are to be quite alone."

"You haven't seen Mr. Oswald, have you, Miss Cara dear? He has grown up that handsome you would not know him. He was always a fine boy; but now—I don't know as I've ever seen a nicer-looking young man."

"I will have my plain white frock, please, Nurse—the one I wore last night," said Cara, absolutely unaware of any connection that could exist between Oswald Meredith's good looks and her second best evening dress—a dress that might do for a small dance, as Aunt Cherry had impressed upon her. It never occurred to the girl that her own simple beauty could be heightened by this frock or that. Vanity comes on early or late, according to the character; but, except under very favourable (or unfavourable) circumstances, seldom develops in early youth. Cara had not even begun to think whether she herself was pretty or not, and she would have scorned with hot shame and contempt the idea of dressing for effect. People only think of dress when they have lost the unconsciousness of youth. She did not understand enough of the a, b, c of that sentiment to put any meaning to what Nurse said, and insisted upon her plain muslin gown, laughing at the earnestness of the attendant. "It is too fine," she said. "Indeed I am not obstinate: it would be a great deal too fine." Her father was waiting for her in the hall when the simple toilette was completed, and Mrs. Meredith had not yet made her appearance when the two went into the drawing-room next-door. Mr. Beresford sat down with his eyes turned towards the door. "She is almost always late," he said, with a smile. He was a different man here—indulgent, gentle, fatherly. Mrs. Meredith came in immediately after, with pretty lace about her shoulders and on her head. "Oswald is late, as usual," she said, putting her hand into Mr. Beresford's. He looked at her, smiling, with a satisfied friendly look, as if his eyes loved to dwell upon her. He smiled at Oswald's lateness; did not look cross, as men do when they are waiting for their dinner. "Cara is punctual, you see," he said, with a smile.

"Cara is a dear child," said Mrs. Meredith. "She has been with me all day. How odd that you should be made complete by a daughter and I by a son, such old friends as we are. Ah! here is Oswald. Would you have known him, Cara? Oswald, this is——"

"There is no need to tell me who it is," said Oswald. Cara saw, when she looked at him, that what the others had said was true. It did not move her particularly, but still she could see that he was very handsome, as everybody had told her. He took her hand, which she held out timidly, and, without any ceremony, drew it within his arm. "We must go to dinner at once," he said, "or Sims will put poison in the soup."

She longs to poison me, I know, in my soup, because I am always late ; but I hope she will let me off for your sake, Cara. And so really you are little Cara ? I did not believe it, but I see it is true now."

"Why did not you believe it ? I think I should have known you," said Cara, "if I had met you anywhere. It is quite true ; but you are just like Oswald all the same."

"What is quite true ?" Oswald was a great deal more vain than Cara was, being older and having had more time to see the effect of his good looks. He laughed and did not push his question any further. It was a pleasant beginning. He had his mother's sympathetic grace of manner, and, Cara felt at once, understood her, and all her difficulties at a glance, as Mrs. Meredith had done. How far this was true may be an open question, but she was convinced of it, which for the moment was enough.

"We did not come downstairs so ceremoniously last time we met," he said. "When you came for the nursery tea, with nurse behind you. I think Edward held the chief place in your affections then. He was nearer your age ; but thank heaven that fellow is out of the way, and I have a little time to make the running before he comes back !"

Cara did not know what it meant to "make the running," and was puzzled. She was not acquainted with any slang except that which has crept into books, but an expression of pleasure in Edward's absence appalled her. "I remember him best," she said, "because he was more near my age ; but you were both big boys—too big to care for a little thing like me. I remember seeing you come in with a latch-key one afternoon and open the door—ah !" said Cara, with a little cry. It had been on the afternoon of her mother's death when she had been placed at the window to look for her father's coming, and had seen the two big boys in the afternoon light, and watched them with an interest which quite distracted her attention for the moment, fitting the key into the door.

"What is it ?" he said, looking at her very kindly. "You have not been here for a long time—yes, it must bring back so many things. Look, Cara ! Sims is gracious ; she will not poison me this time. She has not even frowned at me, and it is all because of you."

"I like Sims," said Cara, her heart rising, she could not tell why. "I like everybody I used to know."

"So do I—because you do ; otherwise I am not so fond of my fellow-creatures ; some of them plague one's life out. What are you going to do when you get used to the excitement of seeing us all again ? You will find yourself very badly off for something to do."

"Do you ?" said Cara, innocently.

"My mother does for me. She thinks me very idle. So I am, I suppose. What is the good of muddling what little brains one has in work ? One in a family who does that is enough. Edward is that excellent person. He goes in for Greek so that my head aches ; though why he should, being intended for the Civil Service, I don't know."

"Won't it do him any good?" said Cara, with regret. She was practical, and did not like to hear of this waste of labour. "Is Edward—changed—like you?" she added softly, after a pause. He looked at her with laughing bright eyes, all softened and liquid with pleasure. He knew what she meant, and that his handsome face was having its natural effect upon Cara; though, being much older than Cara, he could not have believed how little effect his good looks really had.

"I think he is very like what he always was," he said; "he is such a good fellow, Cara. If any one asks you which is the best of the Merediths, say Edward. You may be sure you are right. Listen what the elders are saying; they are talking about you and me."

"Why about you and me?" Cara was always slightly alarmed to hear that she was being talked of. It roused the latent suspicion in her which had been startled into being at her mother's death. She stopped talking, and looked at the other two. His mother was opposite to Oswald, and her father was opposite to her. What an odd arrangement it seemed when you came to think of it! If papa had got one of the boys, and she, Cara, had fallen to the lot of Mrs. Meredith—would that have been better? She looked at Oswald's mother and wondered; then bethought herself of the Hill and blushed. No, such an idea was nothing but treachery to the Hill, where it was Cara, and no other, who was the chosen child.

"She has grown into a little lily," said Mrs. Meredith. "She is shy, but open and winning, and I like girls to be shy like that. I do not wonder that you are proud of her."

"Am I proud of her? I am not sure. She is nice-looking, I think."

"Nice-looking! She has grown into a little lily. It is wonderful how she blends two likenesses: I see you both. Ah! have I said too much? A happy child so often does that; you will forgive me if I say anything that hurts——"

"You could not say anything that hurts," he said in a low voice, "it would not hurt coming from you."

"Well, perhaps it ought not," she said, with a smile, "because it is said in true friendship. I noticed that at once in Cara—sometimes one and sometimes the other—like both. That is not the case with my boys. I shall not have Edward till Christmas. You know it has always been my happy time when the boys were here."

"Is Oswald doing anything—?" A close observer would have seen that Mr. Beresford was not fond of Oswald. He was not nearly so well-disposed to him as Mrs. Meredith was to Cara. Perhaps it was purely on moral grounds and justifiable; perhaps the young man and his senior came in each other's way more than the girl and the matron did. This abrupt question rather put a stop to poor Mrs. Meredith. She blushed a little and faltered as she replied.



## On Turkish Ways and Turkish Women.

FIVE years of my life—from 1867 to 1872—spent in a harem in Constantinople gave me unusual opportunities for making notes on what I saw about me, and I hope some extracts from my papers on various aspects of family and social life, superstitions, &c. may not prove uninteresting at the present time.

The harem comprised some two hundred women, distributed amongst three households under three wives, five or six slave mothers having apartments in the houses of one or other of the wives, and being virtually under their supervision. The rest of the women were in various grades of servitude, if we except five or six old ladies, dependents, who did duty as duennas. There are distinct grades even amongst slaves. Those belonging to the Pacha have the pre-eminence; next come those of the first, second, and third wives; those attached to the persons of the children, according to the ages of the latter; those of the slave mothers, and then slaves of slaves. These last are usually coloured women—Abyssinians, Nubians—and we even had one Hottentot.

The head slaves in any special department are called *calphas*. They always receive a large share of respect and trust; and after a certain number of years of servitude some suitable husband is found for them, a house, slaves, and monthly allowance being provided. It thus becomes the interest of the calphas to please their master or mistress, with a view to especial favour in the matter of an ultimate provision. This sometimes leads to injustice on the part of the calphas towards the slaves whom they have to train and overlook, as they have frequent temptations to throw the blame of their own shortcomings on these younger girls. I saw many instances of this.

The mistress is careful to observe a certain consideration towards the calphas and towards the slaves of others. Thus, she would carefully abstain from asking of the *hassnajee* (tire-woman) a duty belonging to the *chiboucqjee* (pipe-bearer). Nor would she ask for her slippers from the slave of a visitor staying in her house. In the same way the daughter would not expect services as a right from the slaves of her father or mother, although she might ask them as a favour if none of her own attendants were within sight. I have known the Khanum Effendi unwilling to trouble her daughter's slaves for a cup of water, although thirsty and it was hot summer weather. It will thus be seen that there is a certain amount of etiquette in the harem, and I soon found that in the matter of decorum the observances were very strict. The Pacha could not walk across his own harem without the attendance of a eunuch (a hulking African, full of his own importance in his capacity of guard to

the sanctity of the women), preceding his master as *his* master for the time being, crying out at each step, "Desstur! desstur! Pacha Effendi ghelior!" ("Keep to customs! The Pacha is coming!") At which all those women who were not the actual property of the Pacha, being bought with his money and fed with his bread—all the slaves of his wives or daughters, or those of the slave mothers or of visitors—would run and hide themselves behind curtains or in wardrobes, or in side rooms; but you would see them peeping out with wondering faces as the household god passed along—perhaps to visit the apartment of one of his sick children. Strictly speaking, the hareem is that part of the house given up to the undisturbed occupancy of the women. If one of the Pacha's own twenty or thirty slaves chanced to be in any of the apartments he had to cross in thus traversing the hareem, her duty would be to stand still with folded hands till he was out of sight, as it would be considered bad manners on her part to continue in his presence any occupation in which she was engaged, though her lord and master would generally walk straight on, without so much as honouring her with a nod. The Pacha actually owns but one room within the hareem, and this he enters by a door communicating with the *saldamlık*, or men's apartments. None but his own slaves have the privilege of waiting on him here; no others approach even the corridor leading to it.

The moral and social aspects of hareem life, more especially as they affect family life, require to be regarded frankly and fairly if we are to get anything like a just view of them. It must, in the first place, be remembered that what we are accustomed to call "hareem life" (revolting as it is to our conception of the purity of family life) is an institution which belonged to the polity of the Jews, and is as old as the time of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar,—Jacob, Leah, and Rachel. Many unthinkingly set down polygamy to the religious institutions of the Mohammedans, but in so doing they pass over the fact that the latter clearly derived their religious and social institutions from the Jews. The old Israelitish law recognised the son of the bondwoman as well as the son of the free-woman, although not in the same degree. Of the twelve patriarchs four were sons of slave mothers, and these shared with their brethren the honour of being the progenitors of the great Israelitish nation. Their descendants continued the customs permitted to their ancestors and attached no blame to them. According to Turkish law the children of slave mothers are legitimate, and on the father's death have a proportionate share in his fortune with the children of the wives. The slave mothers occupy in the hareem a recognised and respected position, which is, however, always subordinate to that of the wives, in whose presence they stand with folded hands. The rank of a slave mother depends on the sex of her child. Her title is *Oommool-Bey* (mother of a boy) or *Oommool-Khanum* (mother of a daughter). In the case of the Imperial household, as the Sultan is of too exalted a rank ever to condescend to the ceremony of the *nikiah*, or giving of marriage pledges, he has no wives,

but his chief favourites are called *kaden* (lady), and take precedence as first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh lady. It is a great mistake to suppose a sultana to be the *wife* of a sultan; such a person does not exist. *Sultana* is a title belonging to an Imperial princess in right of her birth. The mothers of the Sultan's children are thus virtually *all* slave mothers. *Validé Soultan* is the distinctive title used in speaking of the mother of the Padishah, or Sultan, but it applies also to the mothers of the Sultanas.

There are in reality four words—*validé*, *omméol*, *nina*, and *ana*—expressing “mother;” and the shades of difference in meaning show how decidedly a Turkish woman's grade in society is derived from her motherhood. *Ana* is applied even to animals, but *nina* is the ordinary appellation, and used by a child to its own parent. Great veneration is shown the *Sood-Nina* (milk-mother), or foster-mother. *Buyuk Khanum Nina* (great lady mother), *Ortanji Khanum Nina* (middle lady mother), *Kitchuck Khanum Nina* (little lady mother), are the respectful titles given by a child in speaking of its father's first, second, or third wife; and *Khanum Nina* (lady mother) usually when addressing the mother directly.

The wives of a Pacha, as I said, have separate suites of apartments, or live in houses communicating with each other, and exchange ceremonious visits, perhaps, two or three times a week, when they recline on the same divan, call each other *kadesh* (sister), and between the whiffs of their chibouques retail the incidents of the visits they have paid and received. On rare occasions the *whole* family meet, and more than once I was present at such a family *réunion*. It was one of the most curious scenes I have ever witnessed. There was a dinner given, the ceremony about which consisted in the waiting being performed by the slaves of the highest rank—in fact, by the slave mothers, who stood behind the chairs of the Pacha, his wives, and children, both sons and daughters. We were not seated on the low circular divan in ordinary Turkish fashion, but at a long table furnished *alla franca* (the Turkish expression for European customs). Silver knives and forks were to be used by all the guests, by the Pacha's express wish. He was evidently preparing a little fun for the whole party, as the duennas, being accustomed to eat only with their fingers, could not manage the knife and fork. One old lady bungled through the courses holding the knife in her left hand and the fork in her right; another abandoned it altogether, amidst much merriment. There was every luxury of silver, glass, and European appliances, and our rather large party almost filled the pretty dining-room, the furniture of which was of carved oak, huge cupboards also of carved oak nearly covering the walls, so that one might almost have fancied oneself in some English country house in the time of the Commonwealth instead of in a mere wooden kiosk at Tchamlidja, a village above Scutari.

But to describe the scene of the dinner more minutely: The Pacha sat at the head of his table full of good spirits, and making *bons-mots* in French and in Turkish, and dispensing his wit in equal measure to his

wives, children, and guests. The eldest son, a young man of about eighteen (the son of the second wife), who had been educated in Europe, sat at the bottom of the table, and kept up the ball of conversation with thoughtless gaiety. It was quite an innovation on Turkish custom that a young man of his age should be admitted to the harem, but it was permitted in this instance with a sort of good-humoured bravado, in order to be the more *alla franca*.

On the Pacha's right sat his third wife, an honour accorded to her ostensibly because it was known that she was even then dying of cancer, but in reality yielded her, as we knew, because her own gracious, calm dignity had won unbounded influence over the Pacha, whose brow would cloud now and then as the unwelcome thought of her critical state would force itself on him. Next to this poor lady was seated the favourite daughter, the only child of the first wife, to whose establishment I was especially attached as governess for French and *demoiselle d'honneur*. This young princess was possessed of great beauty, grace, and high natural endowments, and had been taught English from the time she was three years of age. My place had been reserved by her side. Then came the daughter of Ortanji Khanum Effendi, a very fair, plump young girl of about sixteen, a French lady, her governess, being placed next to her. An Italian lady sat next, and then two younger daughters of the Pacha, while on the left of the young prince at the bottom of the table were placed two old duennas, seventy or eighty years of age, with coffee-coloured skins, over which they had thought it incumbent to fling a veil of white muslin *en négligé* in presence of the Pacha.

On his left sat the Buyuk Khanum Effendi, a stout, fine Circassian lady, with a somewhat haughty expression, tempered just now by great amiability. By her side sat the second wife, a very slight, mischievous, and clever-looking *petite personne*, proud in the consciousness of being the mother of a grown-up son and daughter. Then followed five sons of different ages, four being the children of slave mothers, and the youngest, about four years old, the darling child of the poor princess who was so soon to die and leave him. One or two other places were filled by adopted children.

But the feature in the scene which was most striking, and affected me very painfully, was the sight of the Oommool-Bey and the Oommool-Khanums acting as waitresses behind our chairs. It seemed so out of place that the mothers should serve whilst their children (counted of higher rank than themselves) sat at table, and were waited on by one or other of them. The rich dresses and ornaments worn by these mothers did not lessen the impression I received. They waited gracefully, cheerfully, and with the utmost attention, but by hiding their hands in their long sleeves whenever they had an unoccupied moment they acknowledged their position of servitude.

The Buyuk Oommool-Khanum, the mother of the Pacha's third daughter (herself a fine-grown, tall girl), was a portly person of imposing

height and carriage, very fresh-coloured, with frank blue eyes and a kind, sensible face. She stood behind the Pacha's chair. The Buyuk Oommool-Bey; tall, pale, and fat, black-haired, with narrow, almond-shaped, almost closed, black-blue eyes—accounted a great beauty—stood behind the chair of the eldest son. The third slave mother was of somewhat masculine appearance, angular, with high cheek bones, and very thin, dark, and sallow. All these three women were no longer quite young, and wore their hair cropped short to the ears—a fashion followed by most of the calphas and those slaves who were not dancers. Another Oommool-Bey was a very lovely young woman of about three-and-twenty. She had dark languorous brown eyes, wonderfully long hair, thick lashes, a rich, dark complexion, with a bloom like a cherry on her oval, *piquante* face, and being dressed in cherry-colour, her appearance was altogether most winning and attractive. The Kitchuck Oommool-Bey was exceedingly ordinary-looking, redeemed only by remarkable turquoise-blue eyes; and the Kitchuck Oommool-Khanum, likewise of ordinary appearance, but very amiable, completed the number of those who waited immediately behind us, if I add the Pacha's head calpha, a young woman of eight-and-twenty, having a careworn, hard, domineering, cynical expression.

A second relay of waitresses stood behind the Oommool-Beys and Oommool-Khanums to fetch and carry what was required. One most noticeable figure amongst all the others was that of a little, aged, bent woman, brown as a berry, whose piercing, restless, dark eyes were everywhere, and whose odd red turban could not take away from the regular beauty of her small features, handsome at near seventy. This was Ayesha Khanum, the *kiahia*, or stewardess of the harem, in whose control were all household and money matters. She moved here and there like a tiny bird hopping from bough to bough, making a privileged joke now and then in response to the acknowledged jester of the house (for in all the large Turkish houses, as was the case in our own old Saxon times, a jester is admitted and welcomed, even if not a retainer living in the house). This jester was an extraordinary woman, who in charity might be supposed to be insane, from the wild stories she recounted in a high, shouting voice, as she sat on the floor, her back propped against the wall, her knees cuddled up to her chin by her long brown, bony arms, and over these, her gipsy-like, brazen face, staring eyes, hooked nose, rabbit-like teeth, and lank, thin, coarse black hair. At every lull in our conversation this woman struck in with some anecdote of the Stamboul bazaars, or some witty Turkish proverb, or half-fable of Nasr-ed Din Effendi, the famous Khodja or teacher, who takes with the Turks the place of our *Æsop*. Her sayings had all some point in them, with a view to obtain presents of money, clothing, or some nice dish from the dinner, and in this last she succeeded by quoting the Khodja's Fable No. 17, which relates how the teacher, finding himself one day in a town where everybody seemed making merry, eating and drinking, was invited to partake of the good cheer. Now, as it was a time of famine,



the Khodja continued to eat and drink without troubling himself where the good things came from. When he had finished he asked the reason of the abundance. "Are you so ignorant," was the reply, "that to-day is the fête of Bairam, and that every one has had cooked at home all that he could lay his hands upon, so that each has contributed to the show of provisions? That is why the cheer appears to be superabundant." "Would to Heaven," replied the Khodja, "that every day was Bairam!" The moral that every one should always be ready to give of his plenty to those who want was willingly acknowledged, and a large plate of *tchirkess-yemek* handed to her where she sat. I will particularize this one dish, it being a delicacy. It is composed of pounded walnuts and bread-crumbs in equal quantities, which, mixed together, form the dressing around the dish, which is itself stewed fowl, highly flavoured with pepper, spices, and red chillies, served with an abundance of gravy.

The every-day life of the slave mothers is monotonous in the extreme. They have no special duties like the calphas; their children are not much with them, because, whilst they are young, even the girls leave the hareem, and are given over to the care of men attendants, called *lollahs*, who take them out walking or driving, and are very gentle and kind to them. The mothers are thus left to the dreary loneliness of their own apartments, and pass their time in visiting one another, playing backgammon, or looking listlessly from the windows. They think themselves very fortunate when any Jewish or Armenian pedlar is permitted to bring her wares into their rooms. This is the opportunity they have for spending their monthly allowance, which perhaps amounts to something like 15*l*. It is true the monotony is relieved by the usual promenade on the Friday (their Sunday). It is those of the lower and middle classes who habitually go to mosque, veiled. Ladies of higher rank are supposed to be punctilious in observing the hours of prayer, five times daily, in their own houses. I believe all the Sultanas (the sisters and half-sisters of the present Sultan, Murad V.) are particular in performing these duties.

The life of the wives of Pachas is much less monotonous, as they are constantly receiving and paying visits. They do, indeed, in their hours of ennui, invite the Oommool-Beys and Oommool-Khanums to come and help to amuse them by chatting and playing backgammon. Even at the present day it is not usual to find a Turkish lady of middle age able to read and write her own language, unless she has been trained to become a *kiatib*, or secretary, and one such woman at least is necessary in every household to keep accounts and carry on correspondence with relatives at a distance. The Khanum Effendis I have spoken of learned to read after they were thirty years of age, incited to this mental exertion by knowing that their children were acquiring foreign languages—French and Arabic—whilst the young princess my pupil not only spoke but wrote Turkish, Arabic, and some Persian, English and French fairly well, and understood something of Italian and German.



The calphas have, as I said, each her special occupation, which in a great degree prevents ennui. They are but one grade removed, be it remembered, from the Oommool-Bey and Oommool-Khanums, and some of them are even those who have had the misfortune to return to their grade of calpha on the early death of a child. Such a position does not usually long continue, as a marriage is arranged to obviate the anomalous status they would otherwise occupy. The calphas who are the slaves of a Pacha are as much at the mercy of his wives as Hagar was at the mercy of Sarai when Abram acknowledged her absolute right in the words, "Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee." Hagar could at least, when Sarai dealt hardly with her, flee from the face of her mistress; but then Hagar dwelt in a tent, with the wide wilderness around, into which she might escape. With Turkish slaves the conditions are different; they are, in point of fact, prisoners in houses from which voluntary egress is for them a matter of impossibility, for the windows, although open, are secured by a *kaffes*, or trellis-work wooden blind, firmly nailed down, except where the window is at some height above the waters of the Bosphorus, and the curtained doors are closely guarded by eunuchs. They live, too, in a crowded town, with an organized police constantly on the watch; and if a slave endeavoured to get free she would be traced immediately, and brought back to undergo severe lashings, disgrace, degradation, and contumely. A slave, indeed, represents so much money's worth, and a runaway slave is virtually stealing *herself* from her master's or mistress's possessions; and therefore *theft* is an inherent part of her offence. There can be no doubt that, where slavery is looked upon as an acknowledged or permitted institution the owner is *not* wrong in looking upon the evasion of the slave as robbery. Slaves form a sort of live stock, liable to stray in an inconvenient way; and, inasmuch as they are more responsible than cattle, they may well be punished more severely for the wrong use they make of their intelligence to the disadvantage of their master. I suppose we English, as a nation, have long recognised the justice of this reasoning. I well remember discussing this subject rather hotly with an ex-member of Parliament in a pleasant walk at the Sweet Waters of Asia, where the bright *feridjees* and smiling faces of the women gave an impression that they could have no causes for fear or sorrow. What right had England to take up the cause of the slaves of Turkey, by interfering in the domestic concerns of a friendly Power, it was protested, especially when they all looked so happy? Alas! I might as well have talked to the softly-blowing winds; and I ended with a despairing sigh, thinking of cases of oppression even then going on under my eyes. As a point of fact a girl's life and that of her child are at the mercy of the wife. But should a calpha become a mother, by that fact she is at once raised to the position of an Oommool-Bey or Oommool-Khanum, as the case may be. She then has her own set of apartments, with one or two slaves to wait on her and her infant. The wife may possibly, from vexation, ignore

the mother ; but she shows, or at least feigns, an interest in the child, which is daily carried to her divan to be caressed. Babies are much to be pitied, since they are tightly swathed from head to foot, the arms and legs being secured in a perfectly straight position, and I saw one bound on a narrow board covered with flannel, so that the infant resembled a strangulated mummy, with a very brown and red face showing from its cere-cloths.

When the child is eight days old both it and its mother have that day to undergo the visits and rejoicings of friends, and to listen to the screeching music without which no fête can take place. On this occasion the wives must at least make their appearance ; their visit, however short, implying congratulation, is a sign of good-will so far as the child is concerned.

Those slaves who belong to a mistress and not to a master are in a position infinitely superior to that of those of whom I have just spoken, because they are not exposed to the effects of jealousy. They live in a certain retirement even in the house, are mostly young girls, and after their morning's work is over are taught music and singing by some old Armenian, going to class in a room set apart in the harem for the purpose. They wear an over-gown, or *yeldema*, of white calico, made perfectly plain, reaching to the feet, and not drawn in at the waist ; a piece of muslin is thrown over the head and tied under the chin, not arranged with care, as is a *yashmak*. An under-eunuch is on duty as guard during the lesson, and when it is finished carefully conducts the tottering old man off the premises, crying as he goes, "Desstur! desstur!" at which needless ceremony many of the girls laugh, and even the eunuchs themselves cannot always refrain from smiling, in spite of the great importance they attach to their office. The pupils are expected to show the utmost docility, and to manifest the greatest respect towards their teachers, notwithstanding that they may be Greeks, Syrians, or Armenians. One day some twelve young girls who had been accustomed to a Turkish professor, on learning that they were to have an Armenian teacher in future, determined amongst themselves that they would not be made to kiss his hand on his entering and leaving the room. This became a great offence, and was complained of to the head eunuchs and to the mistress, who ordered them to receive a sound beating with the *knout* on the next day. The castigation never took place, but it would unfailingly have done so but for my intervention and somewhat strong defiance of the chief eunuch. It must not be supposed that the punishment was designed with the intention of bringing the girls to a just estimate of a nationality they are quite ready to underrate. Far from that. The girls had been insubordinate to authority, and they must be thoroughly reduced to obedience. The moral side of the subject was not neglected by me, and the slaves who had offended were doubly careful to salute their master respectfully, and to show their gratitude for the pardon accorded to them by a most willing alacrity in serving the Khanum Effendi in future.

These girls, for the most part, were quick to feel gratitude and remember kindnesses. A calpha who had broken a piece of porcelain came to me one Sunday just as I was starting for church. "Janem!" (my soul), she said coaxingly, "if you could only stay to piece it together now, it might save me a beating when I go to show it to Ayesha Khanum." So I cheerfully stayed and gave up my morning to the good work, for which I was rewarded by succeeding in the object I had in view, and I saw that the slave approved my code of religious duty, and did not think it *bosh lakerde*—a Turkish phrase meaning "empty speech." The slave girls shield one another where they can, and will faithfully stand by a friend in illness, even when it entails much heavy nursing. And so many die of consumption in the course of a year! One sick bed will bring out many traits of kindly sympathy. Nevertheless, all the attention a slave gets is bestowed by her companions as they chance to have leisure or thought for her. It is nobody's stated business to bring her her *pairiz yemek* (strict diet), to wait on her, and observe the doctor's instructions; unless, indeed, in some special case which comes under the supervision of the mistress of the house. One tiny slave, a child of about six or seven, named Rosina, a gentle, quiet little body, fell ill. Her illness was severe, and took the form of typhoid fever. For many days she was carefully and affectionately tended by many of the elder girls in an airy upper room overlooking the garden. Even the young Khanums would go in occasionally, until, from fear of infection, the *hakim* prohibited their visits. But Rosina grew worse and worse, and was given over. At this juncture she was removed to a lower room on the stone basement, for the convenience of removing the body as soon as possible after death. It was very dreadful to me that the poor child should be left to die. A strong impulse to try and save her came over me. "Give her to me, Khanum," I said, "and let me see what I can do."

"But the *hakim* says she must die," was objected again and again, till I gained my point.

I lost no time in making it known that the dying child belonged to me for the time being, and hurried down to the basement room. An old, tender-hearted, helpless, and very ignorant *nina* was alone watching in the room, rocking herself to and fro, telling her beads and muttering prayers. Rosina lay white and stiff, the poor brown parched lips, half-closed eyes, and laboured breathing betokening how ill she was. I moistened her lips, and finding she could swallow, gave her a little *vin de quinquina* mixed with water. Then I let her sleep, and allowed no one to talk near her, or disturb her by the practice of any of the various musical instruments—'Ood or Kanoon—that were twanging in various rooms on this story. Only very slowly the child grew gradually stronger, and then came the difficult part of my nursing. She said she did not want to live; she had suffered too much. Allah was not good. She would not take medicine nor eat to get well. To hear her say that was an immense pain to me, for I had been getting very, very fond of her.

Soothing kindness, promises that she would yet run about and enjoy many years of bright, happy life, had no effect for many days, so there was no choice from the first but to conquer her by force and make her take remedies and food. At last Rosina was on her feet again, strangely taller, thinner, and with very wild eyes, and long, uncut hair. The child seemed to have undergone a transformation in the course of a month or so. She was no longer shy and timid, but wild in the extreme; as her strength came back she seemed to delight in spending it heedlessly. Now she would be on the mountain amongst the grapes, taking as many as she would; then in the stables, fondling the horses; anon in the large, fine sea-bathing house, calling to the pet sturgeon to rise for bread-crumbs. We never knew where Rosina was, and many are the moments of anxiety her heedlessness caused me. She knew that she had a hold over me, and was merciless. To others she professed that she owed me a grudge never to be forgiven for having saved her life; but I knew by numberless signs that it was not so. Sometimes, when I least expected her presence, she would pounce out on me from some hiding-place with a present of freshly-gathered flowers or fruits, which she had been to the mountain to fetch; or, in the midst of some scene of ceremony, she would clasp me with uplifted arms and cling to me affectionately. Rosina had become a privileged person, and although she was looked upon as a little mad she always had her own way. She became, in fact, the tyrant of her small circle. It was Rosina who was consulted first on the Friday whether the drive should be to the Sweet Waters of Asia or to the promenade at Tchamlidja. Fâtéma Khanum, a young lady of the family, of about Rosina's age, very quick, boyish, and determined, would always vote against Rosina, so that there were two parties, with two leaders, amongst the children.

"Beys, I am going to Tchamlidja," Fâtéma would announce, shaking out her pink silk skirt under its embroidered muslin tunic, and throwing a sidelong glance of superiority at Rosina.

"And, Beys, I am going to Gueuk Sou" (the Sweet Waters), Rosina would announce, with still greater emphasis, "and if you like you can come in the little carriage with me."

"Yes, Rosina, you shall go where you like," broke in one of the more impetuous and generous-hearted of the Beys, "and I and my lollah will take care of you."

"And we will go with you too," broke in two of the other Beys; whereupon there followed much clamour from Fâtéma and her adherents, all in childish, good-humoured rivalry. On this occasion the forces divided, but a special carriage was ordered out for Rosina, who went to Gueuk Sou, as she had intended.

In presence of the Khanum Effendi, Rosina was, perhaps, the only slave who was really free and independent. Her figure comes up before me as I write—lithe, meagre, high-shouldered, restless, ever shifting in its movements; her face, long and oval, framed in by quantities of lank, tawny-

brown hair ; her hazel eyes, half-serious, half-mischievous, glancing merrily from side to side. They tell me she is now still much as I knew her—a little wild in her ways, and undisciplined—but as Rosina joined the French class it is supposed that she is a somewhat learned personage in her little sphere.

I have here described the lives of the women of different grades in the hareem of a great Pacha. In the Imperial palaces belonging to the late Sultan Abdul Aziz the seclusion was much more strict, and the monotony of their existence much greater. No chance visit from a European lady could be permitted ; no Jewess with her pedlar's wares went beyond the outer court ; a promenade to the Sweet Waters was an exceptional liberty granted occasionally to the chief *kadens* and their suites. The most frequent "news" for them would be the advent of a batch of some three or four new slaves as a present to the Sultan's hareem, sent as a complimentary gift to his Majesty by his mother or sister, or others, at the recurrence of some religious festival or birthday rejoicing. The Imperial hareems sometimes become overstocked through these gratuitous offerings, and then those who have already ceased to please yield their handsome apartments and jewels to their successors, and are married off to some *kiatib* or *yuz-bache* (captain of a hundred), whose pay for the future serves to support both himself and the wife whom he cannot refuse without losing his livelihood.

In trying to study the inner lives of the slave girls with whom I came into contact I was struck by the constant repression of all outward feeling in the presence of the mistress. They could assume so guarded an aspect—could exercise such control over the facial muscles, especially over the expression of the pupil of the eye—that it was at times impossible to read what might be passing in their minds—a safeguard against misunderstanding which circumstances seemed to justify in certain cases. Once out of the range of the mistress's eye, surrounded only by those she can trust, the slave casts off the habitually assumed indifference of manner, and gives free play to her natural style, mode of speech, and characteristic gestures. Thus the same individual was continually coming under my observation at different hours of the day in diverse phases of temper and behaviour, and sometimes she who had appeared, in the presence of the Khanum Effendi, to be most fussy and careful about trifles, would, when off duty, laugh the loudest and give herself up to gossip and merry-making, utterly disregarding the duties she ought to have been attending to when the younger slaves (who were under her orders and really anxious about their especial functions being duly performed) would timidly press her for directions.

As to the tone which prevails in the hareem, etiquette seems in a great measure to regulate that ; but in point of fact a quiet, sedate demeanour, absence of hurry, *restfulness*, form rather a part of their moral obligations, for the body must be maintained in a state of quietude that the mind may be in perfect equilibrium. A well-instructed, "orthodox" Mussul-



man woman admits to herself all this and more; she recognises the reason of her seclusion within the sheltering walls of the harem to be due to a tender solicitude that she may be shielded from the effects of disturbing influences in the world without, and may follow the bent which one masculine mind only imposes on her. There is a Mohammedan home in Turkey in which I have seen this feeling touchingly exemplified. The master of the house, Ahmed Wefik Effendi, is known to all the first classes of European society in Constantinople, not only as a "good old 'Turkish' gentleman" of most urbane manners, hospitable disposition, and thorough uprightness of character, but as a man of learning, of sterling knowledge, and of devotion to books, of which he possesses in his home, on the European bank of the Bosphorus at Roumeli Hissah, a whole libraryful, comprising the choicest volumes in Turkish, Persian, Arabic, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese—all of which languages he understands and can, I believe, converse in. I am not sure if he also understands Hindustani, but I have an idea that he knows something of it. Ahmed Wefik Effendi presents the anomaly of a thorough bookworm who is most genial, courteous, and pleasant to the many European visitors who come to disturb the quiet of his chosen retreat, and who count it a great privilege to obtain an introduction to him. The Effendi is certainly a man of sound judgment, much exact knowledge, and great probity, and yet is, in most things, as I said, a thorough Turk of the old school, with prejudices and likings and dislikings to boot. *A propos* of Turkish abuses, I remember a story which was told me of the Effendi's way of cutting the Gordian knot of oppression and misrule. When he was governor in a vilayet or province (whichever it might be), a poor man had complained to him that he was unable, after many applications, to obtain the liquidation of a debt due to him from a rich Pacha of the neighbourhood. The Effendi undertook to settle the matter. He invited the Pacha to breakfast, which was served with much punctilious respect, and the guest was entertained with an unfailling flow of conversation and anecdote. When the time came for the Pacha to take leave, he ordered his slaves to have the carriage brought round. But before the attendants could withdraw the Effendi spoke. "Pacha, I am afraid you cannot have your carriage on this occasion," he said, as politely as ever; "it is not at your disposal." "How!" exclaimed the astonished Pacha; "have not my dogs of servants awaited my pleasure?" "Pacha Effendi," replied the governor, "it is not that your servants are in fault, but that I ordered your carriage and horses to be sold by public auction, to pay a little bill you have owed for some time; for, as you would not attend to it, the matter came to me for decision. I am sorry you will have to walk home."

Years after this happened, and when the Effendi had long retired into private life, a wholesome remembrance of his courage in the instance I have cited was preserved amongst the Pachas of Stamboul, and was perhaps one reason why so few posts of importance were committed



to him. I know he was once in an office connected with the regulation of the Customs department, where the abuses had become so flagrant that even the Turks themselves complained of the deficit in the revenue always observable under the head of "Customs duties." The work of attempting reforms here must have been enough to drive an honest man wild, since bribes are willingly accepted by the lower officials, the worst of whom, I must say, are Greeks and Armenians of the most mercenary and grasping type of those who hold office only to enrich themselves, and in this emulate and surpass the system of peculation which has so subtly interwoven itself into the very nerves and sinews of the Turkish body politic, which has now become a centre of corruption, whose offensiveness has been permitted to steal from the healthful well-being of friendly nations. For there can be no question that peculation maintains its character as such, whether it be practised by a Custom House underling who passes out chargeable goods free of duty for the sake of the small fee he can put into his own pocket, or whether it be practised by a Government on the verge of bankruptcy that renews foreign loans on obligations which it knows it can never take up, or negotiates at prices which are ruinous to its creditors, while fabulous sums are drafted off to the private expenses of the Imperial household or of Pachas in high employ. We are sorry, of course, for the friends who have lost money and comforts, and a provision for the future of their children, by their Turkish bonds; but I doubt if we shall ever be stirred up to raise our voice to warn them against the risk (I will not say the want of wisdom) of embarking capital in the support of a nation where it is seen to have the faculty of melting out of sight by the very heat of the pursuit after it, however coolly and indifferently that pursuit may appear to be carried on.

The habit of giving and receiving bribes in the Customs department has many evils; not only does it absorb an appreciable item of the revenue, but it *forces* wrong-doing on the Frank tradesmen of Pera, several of whom have complained to me at different times of the impossibility of getting goods ordered for a certain season by the time they were demanded by purchasers without using the unfailing lever of *baksheesh* in order to save their goods and their credit with their customers.

But to return to the Effendi. He was not long maintained in his position as reformer of the Customs administration, but afterwards was made Minister of Public Instruction for a time, but not for many months. Probably he was too advanced for his co-religionists, since he believes in the theory that the earth moves round the sun, whilst the faithful devoutly believe that the sun moves round the earth. I have heard he had some elementary geographical primers printed for use in the Government schools with demonstrations of the disputed theory—a right understanding of which has done so much in other nations of Europe to make men perceive that many an apparent truth is not an actual one.

But I must not further digress to speak of the mixed industrial school and the drawing-classes for women which Ahmed Wefik Effendi sought to encourage. My paper deals rather with the aspects of family life amongst the Turks; and I would now give a sketch of the Turkish household to which I alluded in another page as worthy of the name of home. It is, indeed, one of the *comparatively* few Turkish houses in which a home can be said to exist. The family consisted of the Effendi, his one wife, his aged mother, three or four daughters, and as many sons. There is a perfect *entente cordiale* between the members of this household. The father and mother consult each other in all matters concerning their children's welfare, as to whom they may or may not visit, how often they may have a treat away from home, and so on. I find they lean decidedly to uninterrupted home influence as far as may be. The daughters are bright, cheerful, happy girls, and seem to acquiesce most good-humouredly, and without a shade of regret, in the home rules made for them by their parents. They take great pride in helping intelligently in household matters. They spin fine gauze fabrics, choosing their own colours and making their own striped patterns; they embroider open-work flowers in satin-stitch in coloured silks on handkerchiefs and waistbands, and make a quantity of the fashionable and pretty Armenian trimming called *oiyah*, which resembles strings of tiny flowers, all made with a single needle; they also ornament with minute discs of gold or plated metal those long dinner-towels (*soffra béz*) which the *soffradjee*, or head-waitress, carries over her left arm when she appears within the apartment thus mutely to announce that it is time to wash hands before partaking of the meal which is waiting. The Effendi's daughters do not disdain to do plain needlework. Besides other occupations, they learn to read and write Turkish and French, and paint flowers and landscapes in water-colours. This last is a great innovation on Turkish habits, as any representation of natural objects is usually held by Mussulmans to be a breach of the Second Commandment, and is the reason why the fine arts are almost wholly neglected amongst them. I cannot speak positively of all the acquirements of these young Turkish ladies, but I believe they have a knowledge of the poetry of their own country, and they have, no doubt, like most ladies of their rank, cultivated their musical taste to some degree, so that they can play the 'Ood, *Kanoon*, and *Tar* (the lute, dulcimer, and tambourine), the instruments to be found in most houses where there is any pretension to cultivation. I must not forget to say that these young ladies are very clever confectioners, and are never ashamed to say that they made this or that dish of sweets. *Helvâ*, a dish which resembles, when it is properly made, semi-opaque spun glass in short broken pieces, and is very luscious to the taste, is one of their favourite offerings to strangers; *mahalabee*, a sort of stiff ground-rice pudding, delicately flavoured, and served cold, is another. But, indeed, their ingenuity and willingness it would seem impossible to tire out when employed in the duties of hospitality.

The family I have here described is not unique in its characteristics or mode of life. It may be taken as the true type of what a Turkish family, living in simplicity and according to the rules of their religion, really is. They are certainly more cultivated than others of their class; but I have it on their own authority that there are many families on the banks of the Bosphorus and in Stamboul of their own standing, and reckoned amongst their friends, who follow the same simple pursuits in their everyday life, and are as free from intrigue or moral taint as we could wish them to be.

The two causes which seem to me to destroy all hope of moral improvement for the ordinary and uncultivated Turks are the isolation of the sexes and the utter subjection of the women. Whilst the children, both boys and girls, in their earliest years are allowed to escape from the influence of the women to the care of men only, from whose unrestrained conversation they are sure to pick up ideas which (to deal with the matter only negatively) are not refining; whilst girls from ten to sixteen are forbidden the society of men, to which they have been hitherto almost totally left, and are thrown back on idle hours, given up to dreaming from the *koffes*-covered windows; whilst young men employ *gueurjees* to go and "look at" a girl for them before engaging her as a wife (as lightly and in the same spirit as a man would say to his friend in England, "Just look at that horse for me"); whilst they have no thought of trying to win a companion and helpmeet by the persuasion of their own moral worth—so long Turkey must suffer from moral degradation, the mass of her men remaining brutes, whilst her women are ignorant, vain, conceited puppets, served by that miserable class the slaves, who keep alive jealousy and cruelty in the women and sensuality and extravagance in the men.

Turkish women have assured me that the Koran itself never imposed seclusion on women. If Turkey is to be regenerated, boys and girls must receive a mixed education and real moral training *together*; and their influence on each other must be turned to good account, to teach them to estimate the worth of each other's society, so that the evils of Eastern seclusion may be gradually rooted out. These evils are certainly not imposed by the laws of the Koran, and some of the best men amongst the Turks would gladly see them done away with. Mussulmans will have to throw aside many customs which have arisen from their traditions alone before they can readily understand the value of our Western home life, with its simplicity, its moral restrictions, and yet free choice of action. Whatever gloss they take on of our European civilisation will only increase their moral corruption till they understand that we have for our women, as individuals, principles of action which are safer guards than veils, barred windows, and sentinelled doors.

F. E. A.

## Poetic Imagination and Primitive Conception.

MOST persons, perhaps, if asked to define a simile, would describe it as a form of speech employed to bring out some particular aspect of an object by supplying the idea of something which it resembles. The etymology of the word clearly points to this fact of resemblance, and there is no doubt that it constitutes an essential feature in all figures of speech. It is always delightful to discover links of similarity between widely-unlike things, and the exhilarating effect of a new metaphor arises in part from the sudden perception of an affinity between very remote and in other respects dissimilar objects. Every reader will be able to recall the exquisite pulsation of pleasure which some of Mr. Tennyson's similes supply, through their very remoteness from the ideas to be illustrated. When, for example, we read in *The Princess*,

and on her mouth  
A doubtful smile dwelt like a clouded moon  
In a still water,

we are delighted with a first discovery of this obscure and subtle likeness in something so familiar as a human smile.

But a simile is something more than a presentation of a point of likeness. The mental image called up by the figure of speech serves in some way to emphasise or intensify a particular aspect of the object, and it does this not only by marking it off, so to speak, for special attention; but also by supplying the aspect or quality of the object under a more striking form. The poet illustrates the less by the greater, and not conversely. The terrible aspects of war are magnified by similes of rushing storm, &c. The gaiety and elegance of Chaucer's Squire are emphasised by the simile of a "mead" "full of fresh flowers, white and rede." Tennyson, when seeking to impress the reader with the exquisite purity of a lady's mind, ransacks nature for one of the most perfect examples of pure colour:—

As lines of green that streak the white  
Of the first snowdrop's inner leaves.

There is one mode of obtaining this effect of emphasis by simile which is so old, so common, so characteristic of the great poets of ancient and modern times as to deserve especial attention. It clearly stands in a certain relation to such simple modes of intensifying the worthy and beautiful aspects of objects as those just illustrated, yet it owes its peculiar virtue to a distinct principle. Writers on style have not, we think,

fully analysed this effect, and on this account we shall make it the special study of this paper.

We may best, perhaps, characterize this kind of figurative treatment in poetry as the employment of animistic conception, using the word in a larger sense than that given it by Mr. Tylor in his *Primitive Culture*. In this extended meaning animism would denote the habit of thought, so prevalent in early stages of culture, of conceiving all existence as compounded of the bodily and the spiritual. Thus all inanimate objects are supposed by the primitive man to be inspired with conscious feeling and will, and, on the other hand, all mental existence is regarded as rooted and enfolded, so to speak, in material, the human spirit itself being conceived as a subtle form of matter enclosed in the grosser tangible body. Possibly the term anthropomorphism serves as well as any to express this whole mode of thought.

Now poetic imagery abundantly illustrates a habit of regarding things precisely similar to this primitive style of conception. This operation of fancy has two sides: it may manifest itself in the fanciful embodiment of the spiritual in a material framework, or it may take the form of breathing spirit and conscious feeling into material objects and events.

Illustrations of each of these mental processes will readily recur to the reader. The first tendency is seen in the common practice of poets of vivifying the several operations of the mind by assimilating them to material movements. Shakspeare, for example, tells us "hope is swift, and flies with swallow's wings." The passions of love, anger, &c. are constantly described by metaphors drawn from the movements of flowing stream, stormy blast, raging fire, and so on. Again, the several classes of mental phenomena and the various powers and qualities of mind are made impressive by being *personified*, that is, presented as complete personal existences. Shakspeare speaks of our doubts as traitors, and Milton pictures laughter as "holding both his sides." Ingratitude is finely personified in the well-known words of King Lear:—

Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend!

The simple emotions of love, hate, jealousy, &c., and the several leading moral qualities, such as truth, modesty, and purity, have so often been personified that it is unnecessary to quote examples.

To turn now to the second aspect of this mode of poetic intensification, namely, the transformation of material objects and events by a kind of spiritualisation—we find that the whole of poetry is saturated, so to speak, with the products of this impulse. The complete personification of inanimate objects is exceedingly common in poetry. The various forms of plant-life lend themselves most easily to this kind of treatment. Heine, for example, is continually spiritualising trees and flowers. His conception of the lonely pine-tree in the north, covered with ice and snow, dreaming of the solitary palm of the south

mourning on its burning rock, is a fine example of such poetic transformation. Besides plants, all lifeless objects in nature, the heavenly bodies, the sea and mountain, and the natural forces, as wind, are frequently presented as living persons, modern poetry preserving in this respect the habits of thought of ancient mythology. As an example of this one cannot do better than refer to Shelley's delightful poem *The Cloud*, or to his striking lines *The Waning Moon*.

When the natural object is not presented as a complete personality, its various aspects and changes may be vivified by assimilation to some of the qualities of living and conscious beings. Thus Milton speaks of the nightingale as "smoothing the rugged brow of night." A delicate touch of such partial personification is to be found in Mr. Morris's favourite epithet for the sea. The expression "waters wan" seems faintly to suggest a likeness to the human countenance. All movements of sea, river, and storm are constantly described in terms of conscious will. The sun "climbs" the arch of heaven, the cataract "leaps" madly down its abyss. So again the varying conditions of nature, as a whole, are poetically interpreted as changing moods. At one time she is "angry," at another "resting" and content. Morning is glad, while evening is pensive.

Now that which the poet does for us, in his own perfected manner, we are all wont to do for ourselves, in a rougher fashion, in our individual contemplation of natural events. That is to say, the poet who thus figuratively transmutes the operations of conscious mind and lifeless matter is but appealing to a deeply-rooted instinct which all imaginative minds betray in their daily conceptions of things. Whenever we cease to regard the phenomena of nature as mere facts, and give ourselves up to the enjoyment of their beautiful aspects, we naturally glide into this double mode of conception. If, for example, we are indulging in a sentiment of admiration for virtue, we instinctively seek to realise our object of thought by conceiving it under the form of a quasi-human presence. So again in our more frequent æsthetic contemplation of external nature, we involuntarily pass to a spiritual transfiguration of material objects and their changes. The sounds of murmuring sea, bubbling brook, and whispering foliage seem to be so many mysterious voices which we would fain seize and comprehend. The movements of dancing waves and whirling leaves express varying moods of gaiety or wild despair. So too the changeful play of light and shade on sea, plain, or mountain slope faintly calls up ideas of those human experiences which are wont to express themselves in innumerable gradations of smile and frown.

The process of thought which underlies this mode of imaginative conception is a very curious one. At first sight, indeed, it may appear a wholly mysterious and inexplicable operation. In what way, it may be asked, can the mind identify, even for an instant, things so strongly contrasted as the placid surface of a summer sea, or a softly shining star,



and a living conscious person? The amount of likeness in such a case is infinitesimal as measured by the extent of the dissimilarities, and yet the mind of the spectator seems for a moment to blend these disparate ideas. At the instant of poetic intuition he may be said even to *believe* in the quasi-human aspect of the object he thus contemplates. How is such a mental operation effected?

It is obvious that this poetic intuition has a certain relation to our every-day interpretations of one another's words and emotional expressions. When I "read" the feelings of another, the process which really takes place in my consciousness is as follows: a certain external impression, a sensation of sound or of visible movement, directly and powerfully calls up and sustains the mental representation of some emotion, and this representation is regarded as answering to a state of feeling outside the spectator's own mind. So too when in a moment of idle reverie I see an overhanging mountain as some dread giant, looking down with dark brow and threatening mien, this imagination really depends on the same kind of mental action. The points of analogy between the mountain and a human figure in a menacing attitude powerfully call up an ideal representation of a certain state of feeling and volition, and this idea is projected, so to speak, as a reality behind the object of perception.

The close analogy between these two kinds of conception will be seen more clearly if it is remembered that no knowledge derived from cooler intellectual moments has any effect in directly contradicting the result of this poetic "intuition." Neither the intelligence gleaned from common life nor the teaching of science can directly disprove the existence of the mental behind every object in nature. If then the resemblance of feature between the inanimate object and the living body is striking enough to call up in a vivid manner the idea of an underlying consciousness, there seems to be no reason why this idea should not rise to the level of a momentary conviction.

But now comes a point of contrast between our cool perceptions and our poetic and imaginative intuitions. When I interpret the movements of a human face as indicating an emotion of pain, for example, I find every subsequent observation helps to confirm my first inference. For one thing these movements take place in a human face, that is to say, they belong to an object which all my past experience has accustomed me to regard as endowed with consciousness. Further, if I am in any doubt as to the present perception, I may attain a number of corroborations by interrogation, and by observation of subsequent conduct. In the case of imaginative personification, however, all these confirmations are wanting. Beyond the single point or few points of resemblance between the material object and a living conscious form, all the properties of the object are distinctly unsuggestive of life and feeling. The rigid immobility of the mountain, its immense size, its numerous details of form and colour, all this would tend to extinguish the idea of

personality, not by directly contradicting it, but by failing to suggest it. The peculiarity of this imaginative contemplation of objects lies then in a certain *selectiveness* in the processes of observation and perception of the moment. In abandoning ourselves for a few moments to the pleasing illusion that the bright-green waves which plash about the base of a big rock are playful elves caressing the feet of a morose giant, we are abstracting from all the numerous points of difference between these objects and living human forms, and confining our attention to the like features or aspects. Yet we never do completely ignore the points of difference, and this fact is shown in the quaint, extraordinary forms of human life which we attribute to the objects. Thus a giant is some vast shape, as of rock or mountain, humanised, yet retaining its super-human dimensions. This concentration is effected for us in poetry by the very name of the metaphor, which, like all other words, serves to mark off some limited object or part of an object for our thought. In our own unaided fanciful contemplation of nature we have to effect this concentration of attention ourselves. How does it happen that we often find this concentration so easy, so devoid of everything like voluntary effort?

The answer to this question seems to be that this conception of nature as everywhere living and conscious satisfies a distinct and deeply fixed emotional impulse. We find an exquisite pleasure in unbending from the sober attitude of observation imposed on us by practical necessities, and in falling into that attitude of the imaginative child and of the poet. And this emotional element of consciousness has a powerful influence on the perceptions and ideas of the moment. Just as a lover under the sway of a strong emotion can see only what is graceful and noble in the object of his affection, so a man who sips the delicious satisfaction attending the poetic contemplation of nature is rendered incapable of seeing anything in the objects before him which does not lend itself to this mode of transformation. The pleasurable feeling will penetrate like some subtle electric influence into the deepest recesses of attention and perception, giving an unmistakeable bent to all their activities.

The next question, then, which arises in the elucidation of this process of poetic contemplation has to do with the grounds or sources of this peculiar pleasure. How is it that we find so deep a delight in forsaking the standpoint of a cool and exact observation of nature, and in viewing all its objects through this veil of our own weaving? It is not enough to say that the mind takes pleasure in discovering resemblances between widely unlike things, or that the enjoyment flows from the very activity of phantasy in filling up the void which lies beyond the immediately known. For this does not explain why the perception of resemblance, or the imaginative construction of the invisible, should commonly take this particular form of personification.

This anthropomorphic bent of the poetic mind is, as we have before

hinted, a return to primitive modes of thought. The uninformed mind of the savage, and the naïve intelligence of the child, alike manifest a tendency to vitalise and animise all the objects they observe. All our earliest perceptions are moulded on this type. Everybody who has watched young children closely knows that they have the habit of regarding the most insignificant objects they touch and handle as possessed of life and feeling. Consequently it may be said that the delight of poetic contemplation springs from the satisfaction of a deeply rooted mental impulse, a radical instinct which scientific culture may obscure, but can never wholly eradicate. The pleasure of æsthetic fancy would thus be somewhat akin to that of a good romp, in which we rejoice to throw off for a few moments the shackles of adult life, and to return to the condition of spontaneous childhood.

This answer is no doubt satisfactory up to a certain point. Yet it only throws the problem back one stage. It still remains to be discovered why children fall into this habit of thought; for it can hardly be regarded as an inexplicable instinct of the mind, but seems rather to be connected with more fundamental impulses.

We have already remarked that to add life and consciousness to the perception of a material object is to make it more vivid as an impression. So to present a mental quality or operation under the guise of a material object or a visible movement is to give it greater reality. Children seem only to comprehend the simple movements of sun, water, and wind as inspired by conscious will, and every teacher knows that they have to learn the meaning of mental life, with its processes of thought, and its emotions, through its points of contact and affinity with bodily life. How is this? The full explanation seems to be, that the child naturally and spontaneously views all objects about it as transformations of its own existence. Though in one sense we know ourselves much later, and even then, perhaps, much less perfectly, than we know many of the objects around us, yet all our knowledge of the world outside ourselves appears to take its start from a vague conception of our own double existence. Why the young child should first come to some rough knowledge of itself as a body endowed with sensibility and consciousness is sufficiently apparent. For one thing, it is an object always present. The infant observes its hands and feet when it has nothing else to observe. Another reason is the supreme interest which belongs to its own personality, mental and bodily. Our own pleasures and pains are the things which impress us most among all the facts of existence; and the bodily organism, with its various liabilities to pleasure and pain, and its powers of securing the former and averting the latter, must from the first acquire all the interest of these feelings themselves. Thus it comes to pass that the norm or standard which we all adopt in exploring things around us is that of our own twofold personality.

It need hardly be added that the mental impulse thus arising is further strengthened by the circumstance that of all the objects of our

environment persons resembling ourselves are at this early stage of most interest to us. The young child has the most powerful incentives to mark and understand the movements of its mother, its nurse, and its companions. In this interpretation of others the crude impulse to view everything through the medium of one's double existence becomes hardened into something like a fixed habit of mind.

Our first reality, then, is ourselves; and this is twofold, containing the bodily and the mental, mutually entwined by the closest bonds, and quite inseparable to the undisciplined intelligence. In learning the world about us we have by dint of hard effort to distinguish between what has this double nature and what has not. But there remains the old impulse to regard everything as at once body and spirit, external movement and internal feeling. Hence the satisfaction of transforming in imagination all cases of isolated material or mental existence into this twofold aspect. We vivify our mental operations, our thoughts and emotions, by conceiving them as material movements, and we vivify the lifeless things of sight and touch by breathing into them an invisible consciousness: in each case we are recombining that which our earliest experience and our natural propensities have joined together, and which only scientific education and logical discrimination have put asunder.\*

Confining ourselves now for the most part to one side of this process, namely, the personification of material objects and of visible movement in poetry and in the contemplation of nature, we see that the first consideration which serves to account for its pleasurable character is, that it answers to our earliest and most vivid modes of conception. Yet the peculiar gratification attending this habit of fancy is not wholly explained by this circumstance. In addition to this, it must be borne in mind that it is only when we personify nature that we make it an object of a high interest for our emotional susceptibilities. The stupendous features of the earth's surface may awaken a feeling of awe; its myriad slowly discovered beauties of form and colour may call forth a sentiment of admiration, yet nature only becomes an object of absorbing

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\* It may be objected to the above explanation that two distinct things have been confounded. The personification of a material object, it may be said, may owe its gratification to this primitive impulse; but the clothing of the mental in material forms gives intensity to the object according to another principle. It is much easier to think of a material object which impresses the external senses than of a mental phenomenon through internal reflection. Hence to attach the processes of feeling, willing, &c. to visible movements, is to make them "palpable" by making them objects of sensuous perception. This is true, but the fact does not explain our being able to regard all mental events as thus embodied. This result depends not so much on the few feeble analogies between the mental and the bodily as on the constant experience of the two in conjunction in our own personality. To clothe fancy, will, &c. in forms of bodily movement is thus to reduce them to forms of our most elementary and impressive experience by restoring one factor of this experience. When I speak of anger swelling, or fancy flying, I complete my conception conformably with the primitive type.

interest, of warm, trustful affection, or of intense dread, when she unveils herself to our fancy as a living conscious person.

It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to point out the reason of the superior degree of force and warmth that belongs to the specially human and social emotions, the feelings which gather about our friends and companions. It must be plain to all reflective persons that every child now born into a social medium will from the first learn to associate its own deepest interests with its protectors and companions, and consequently acquire definite sentiments towards these among its earliest feelings. The mother who waits on its every want, who is always a present object of perception, forcing itself, so to speak, on its attention by abundant signs of life and emotion, who comes to represent indefinite possibilities of relief from pain and new gratification, will attract a sentiment long before the inanimate objects of its environment arrest its attention. If further we suppose, what seems pretty certain, that every child is born with definite emotional impulses, having living human beings as their objects, with the instincts of love, and possibly of anger, and even of dread before a strange human presence, which instincts represent modes of feeling developed in the earliest stages of human history, and retained among the most permanent sentiments of the race, we may easily understand how it is that the human presence excites feelings of such a peculiar intensity. When we personify nature, ascribing to its various objects something of a human personality, we bring it within the range of these strong pulsations of feeling.

Nature becomes of peculiar interest to us when we conceive her as standing in a quasi-human relation to ourselves. As an illustration of this fact we may take the common habit in poetry and in our individual contemplation of the external world of regarding objects as entertaining a particular disposition towards us. The idea that changes of weather, and all other movements of nature, are intended for ourselves—for our gratification or annoyance—still lingers even in the habits of speech of educated people. It is hard, we suspect, for the most unimaginative person, when, after looking at an expanse of sea or land under a lenden sky, he suddenly experiences the delicious sensation of light and warmth which a break in the cloudy canopy happens to bring him, not to feel that this unlooked-for pleasure was intended as a special act of grace towards himself. Our impulse to feel grateful at any slight accidental event in the daily order of nature which proves favourable to our aims, rises in the act of poetic contemplation to an enthusiastic recognition of nature as all-loving and fostering. The various aspects of nature suggest numerous shades of emotion. The stormy sea seems sometimes to be pouring forth its anger on us. The pale stars of night look down on us with a touch of remote half-compassionate interest. The blue lake half hidden among its dense woods has a coy look as of some beautiful bashful maiden who seeks to shun our eye, while the dainty brooklet swiftly flowing seawards seems to be urged by an impulse of fear for all

human beholders. In these, and many other ways, nature shapes itself to our fancy as cherishing feelings, thoughts, and purposes which have the closest relation to ourselves.

In the second place, the inanimate object may interest us not by indicating an apparent sentiment towards ourselves, but by seeming to need, if not to make a demand for, our human help, or to appeal to our impulses of caressing love and consolatory pity. The wind moans to our ear like some weak, wandering woman seeking consolation. All tiny fragile forms—the slender stems of wild flowers, the airy gossamer swaying in the light—seem to call for our protection, like weak children exposed to sudden violence. All things of beauty, having a delicate texture and easily perishable—the perfect bloom of a flower's petals, the exquisite forms of hoar frost on trees, and the inexpressible softness of a fleecy cloud—call forth a vague form of this sentiment of caressing care.

The closest and most absorbing of all human relations is that of sympathy, in which one mind throbs in audible unison with another, when touched and made to vibrate by the hand of joy or of suffering; and we may look for a reflection of this relation in our modes of poetic contemplation. The familiar expression "to hold communion with nature" suggests indeed that sympathy plays a prominent part in this contemplation. There are two ways of regarding the action of sympathy in this imaginative intercourse with nature. First of all we may bring our joys and our sufferings to nature, and find a gratification in everything which suggests a corresponding state of feeling. We thus obtain the relief and support which all sympathy from others supplies. The happy lover fondly thinks his new joy is comprehended and echoed in the carol of the birds and the rustling of the leaves. To one enjoying a deep rest after doubt or painful conflict, the quiet face of nature expresses a sympathetic feeling of repose. So again the troubled spirit finds a solace in every suggestion of a sympathetic mood in nature. The frowning mien of dark sea or mountain at evening answers to the perturbations of our hearts. The sad sounds of the sea harmonise with our own internal pains. When oppressed with a sense of loneliness, the solitary aspects of nature, as of a single tree on upland heath, chime in with our feelings. How the poet expresses this harmony of sympathy is known to every reader:—

The wild unrest that lives in woe  
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,  
And onwards drags a labouring breast,  
And topples round the dreary west,  
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

The second way in which sympathy enters into our imaginative contemplation of nature is through our taking part in its imagined joys and sufferings. In this case we do not bring our pleasures and pains to



nature, seeking her participation, but find a gratification in searching out the signs of her own spontaneous emotions, and in sharing in these. The festal sights and sounds of nature, all the signs of a gay glad life, awaken a responsive feeling of gladness in the observer, while the sad undertones of her sounds and all her gloomy aspects dispose the mind to an agreeable melancholy. Nature may fire us to active impulse by her untiring endeavours, or lull us to rest by her deep repose. The quick sensitive mind, alive to every subtle suggestion of human passion in the external world, may thus retrace again and again the whole scale of human emotion in this sympathetic response to nature's utterances.

Nature, then, so far as it presents itself to our imagination as endowed with quasi-human sensibilities, offers a vast additional vent for our various emotions. More especially in our attempts to interpret sympathetically her many fluctuating moods, her ever-varying and swiftly passing shades of joy and sadness, we extend, so to speak, the bounds of our emotional life by taking part in feelings outside our own consciousness, and differing from our own in many respects. Actual sympathy with our friends supplies this same extension of our emotional life, and Art, by creating for us an ideal world of human experience somewhat different from the actual world, provides us with a like enlargement. One supreme attraction of nature, as of art itself, lies in its power of drawing us away from our own individual feelings, and introducing us into a world of wider and more varied experiences.

The fullest realisation of this added emotional life, attained indirectly or ideally through a kind of sympathy with nature, is to be found in a momentary self-identification with the object contemplated. Just as the deepest and most intense sympathy with a friend tends to pass into a temporary oblivion of self, and a complete absorption of thought in the object sympathised with, so the most intent contemplation of nature rises in the case of highly imaginative persons to a temporary confusion of their personality with the object of contemplation. For example, we may go on watching and listening to a mountain beck as it leaps with joy and laughter and full sense of life and power down its broken descent, till by insensible degrees we blend our personal existence with that of the engaging object, realising in vivid imagination its whole state of being, bodily and mental. Who has not caught himself, some spring day, thus losing himself in the contemplation of a noble white cloud which floats swiftly and with perfect ease of motion over the deep blue surface? Poets have more than once described this extreme form of imaginative contemplation. How finely, for example, does Shelley work up to this complete self-identification with nature in his splendid *Ode to the West Wind* :—

Be thou, spirit fierce,

My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Nor will readers of Mr. Tennyson fail to think of the poet's gradual

self-absorption in the "old Yew," as described in the second canto of *In Memoriam* :—

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,  
Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,  
I seem to fall from out my blood  
And grow incorporate into thee.

As both of these examples suggest, this commingling of one's own being with that of an object of nature has as its common motive an emotional aspiration, a longing to escape from some present actual feeling, and to attain a state of mind shadowed forth by the object that holds our attention. The calm star which seems to have reached the perfect state of passionless vision, the rugged mountain that embodies a more than human endurance, the deep-flowing stream which nothing can arrest and which symbolises complete concentration of purpose—these and other objects of nature have their fascination for us as representing a mental condition which we would fain reach ourselves. In this identification of self with the inanimate things of nature our minds attain a vivid ideal enjoyment of an emotional condition transcending that of our narrow individual experience. We fail, perhaps, to find the longed-for reality in any human experience: we seem to discover it in the mysterious life which our imagination projects behind the multitudinous objects of inanimate nature.

It may well be asked by what mental process this self-identification takes place. Nothing appears at first sight more puzzling than that a rational mind can even for an instant lose consciousness of its identity, and fall into the delusion of imagining itself another existence now present to sensuous perception.

This puzzle may, however, be a good deal lightened by one or two considerations. For one thing it may be well to remember that all interpretation of life and existence beyond our present sensations implies an act of imagination which to some extent breaks the course of our actual individual experience. When, for example, in reading a book of travel, I represent to myself a country I have never seen, I have to imagine myself transported thither, and actually perceiving its scenery, its natives, &c. Every act of sympathy, again, rests on an imagination of a state of feeling not directly called up at the moment. In sharing another's sorrow at the loss of a beloved friend, I imagine myself undergoing this very experience, and being appropriately affected by the event.

What, then, is the difference between those cases which involve a rapid power of self-projection, and yet do not amount to an illusive blending of one's own personality with another object, and the poetic self-absorption about which we are now speaking? Simply a difference in the attitude of attention, and a resulting difference in the vividness of the product of imagination. In ordinary sympathy with others the imagination of the particular subjective experience cannot in most

cases become the exclusive mental operation of the moment. The many other impressions of the time are constantly reminding us that the feeling thus represented belongs to a being distinct from ourselves, and the impulses to console or relieve which sympathy with human creatures so powerfully prompts tend to bring us back at once to the attitude of observers, as distinguished from subjects, of the distress. In blending our personality with some object of nature, on the other hand, our whole attention is concentrated in the imaginative operation. All that suggests the particular state of feeling in the object forces itself on our observation and enchains our attention. The pleasure which results from this imaginative realisation of a foreign bodily and spiritual existence acts, as we have seen, in sustaining the concentration of mind. In this way a vividness of conception is reached which is no longer distinguished from the actual emotional experience itself. All the signs of distinct personal existence being now dropped out of sight, the mind lapses into the illusion of an actual incorporation into the object of its contemplation.

This illusion of ardent waking fancy may with advantage be compared with the process of dreaming. "Day-dream" seems, indeed, to indicate very fairly this kind of mental absorption, involving as it does a withdrawal from most of the actual circumstances and events of the particular time and place. Such contemplation differs obviously from dreaming, inasmuch as it takes its start from an actual perception, while dreaming, in many cases at least, sets out from some image of memory. Yet though the material comes from a different source in the two cases, the transformations it undergoes are very similar. Dreaming is characterized by concentration of attention on a few mental images, which thus reach great intensity, and being uncorrected by the normal processes of perception and memory, assume the quaintest and most extravagant shapes. In our dreamy self-projections into inanimate nature, too, it is this arrest and detention of our consciousness by one or a few impressions and their attendant ideas which really bring about the temporary illusion.

In concluding this hasty attempt to elucidate one of the most subtle and intricate of mental processes, we would point out how closely this imaginative self-identification with an object of perception appears to correspond to the primitive mode of conceiving objects as bodily and spiritual after the pattern of our own double existence. When I project myself in fancy into the shape of an imponderable cloud, I imperfectly realise its whole existence, bodily and spiritual. That is to say, I imagine myself having just such a soft, airy material covering, and represent to myself the accompanying bodily sensations, such as the feeling of lightness. It seems not improbable that primitive fancy takes precisely the same direction, and that young children, when construing all objects about them as transformations of their own existence, dimly conceive themselves as experiencing the bodily as well as the mental condition of the object of perception. If so, the poetic self-identification we have just

spoken of would owe much of its fascination and pleasure to the fact that it is the most complete reversion of imaginative perception to the primitive type.

It is evident that the anthropomorphic contemplation of nature in its different forms has its limits. The most imaginative person would find it difficult to humanise or personify many of the most familiar objects of nature. It may be said, perhaps, that everything which is to be thus transformed should at least present itself as moving or as resting after or before movement. Motion is the great manifestation of life and consciousness, and the moving phenomena of nature best lend themselves to this anthropomorphic fancy. The most insignificant thing, such as a dry stick, will acquire a quasi-human character when set in motion on the bosom of a stream. In addition to this, the object to be personified should contain elements which powerfully suggest some interesting state of feeling, interesting either as familiar and stimulative of our impulses of love, dread, sympathy, &c., or interesting as answering to some aspiration for new experiences of sensation and emotion.

If space permitted, it might be worth while to trace certain modern developments of this anthropomorphic fancy, due apparently to the influence of scientific culture. Thus one may find signs, for example, in Goethe's pantheistic poems, of a tendency to reduce the mental in nature to a mere living force, a something which binds us to the inorganic world in one inseparable *Weltall*. This is still a kind of anthropomorphic fancy, but a fancy greatly curbed and disguised.

On the other hand, we might point out the influence of other and religious modes of thought on this habit of poetic fancy. Ascetic ideas and religious aspirations have disposed the modern Christian world to find one of its most beautiful and elevating conceptions in disembodied spirit, and poetry, which has to express the deepest impulses of a people and an age, has been visibly coloured by these habits of feeling. At the same time the older impulse to conceive and to present the mental and the bodily in the closest union has maintained its influence, and the result of the two tendencies has been the creation of a new type of poetic image. Christian imagination has added to the palpable forms of ancient mythology, such as nymph and faun, the intangible forms of angel. Such beings are presented as clothed in a subtle material vestment. The influence of this Christian imagination extends even to those who profess themselves antagonistic to Christianity. No poet more revels in images of spirit separated from gross material body, yet tenanted by attenuated ethereal forms, than the "irreligious" Shelley.

## First of September.

NOBODY who has ever read the description of the first of September in the history of the Pickwick Club can doubt that it has a great deal to recommend it beyond the mere pleasure of shooting. The drive out in the cool of the morning; the beauty of the green English landscape, hardly showing as yet one spot upon its summer vesture; the sociability of a shooting party, and the pleasure of lunch after a fatiguing morning, are all accessories to the sport only partially experienced either by the angler or the fox-hunter. It is curious, too, that shooting, though the least accessible of all three kinds of sport to the general public, has always been the favourite vehicle for the exposure of cockney blunders. This was the case long before the days of *Punch*; and yet the inexperienced performer must make himself equally ridiculous either with the rod or in the saddle. Perhaps it is more easy to make a caricature of a man out shooting, and to depict his perplexity and ignorance, than in either of the other two predicaments. And certainly we have always thought that the figure of Mr. Winkle spinning round and round in a stubble-field, after the rising of a covey of partridges, and calling out, in an agony of excitement, "Where are they, where are they? tell me when to fire," would have made a much better subject for illustration than the celebrated scene with the tall horse. But, however this may be, partridge-shooting is certainly one of the most delightful of English field sports; and if we could only forget the heartburnings which are occasioned by over preservation of game, and the jealousies which arise out of the question of "sporting rights," the first of September would be a red-letter day indeed with all persons who have a taste for amusements of this kind: this article is not written, of course, for those who have not. But even those who have, must often, like the present writer, be disturbed in their minds when they think of these things; and must wonder whether it will ever be possible to get rid of these drawbacks without rooting up the wheat with the tares. We shall glance at the principal objections to which shooting lies open before finishing this article. But, in order not to throw a cloud over the scenes we are about to depict, we may say at once that we hope to give a very good account of them. And, more than that, we will lap the soul of the sportsman in Elysium for a few moments by taking him back to a time when these objections had no existence. We need not go so far back as the reign of Queen Anne; though the goodness of that gracious sovereign seems, according to the late Lord Stanhope, to have extended itself even to

partridge-shooting. The particular golden age we are thinking of lasted a good deal longer than that, even into the reign of Queen Victoria. Happy hunting grounds undisturbed by the progress of knowledge; thick stubbles undisturbed by the progress of agriculture; long days, and short lunches, and moderate bags—

*Et patiens operum exiguæ assuetæ juvenitæ—*

were still common in Britain when her Majesty ascended the throne of these realms forty years ago next June.

But for the first of September, old style, in perfection we must go a little further back perhaps than that; if not before the rise of what Mr. Disraeli calls "the Condition of England Question," at least before the great political convulsions, with which the second quarter of this century commenced, had clouded the mellow sunshine of that long calm day which lies between our two revolutions like a valley between mountain chains. There was a time, at all events, in the present century—we need not specify it more particularly—when a tenant still regarded the sporting rights of his landlord as part of the order of nature; when it no more occurred to him that partridge-shooting was for "the likes of him" than it did to get up into the pulpit; when the comparatively small damage then inflicted on his crops by hares and rabbits was reckoned in with droughts and floods as something over which he had no control, and which it would be impious to murmur at; when the parson shot over his own glebe unworried of newspaper or bishop; and when almost anybody who wanted to shoot could find unpreserved land to walk over, with a reasonable supply of game on it. In those piping days of social peace, under the reign of the old gods, when Old Leisure\* sauntered under the garden wall, picking the leaves off the apricots, or slumbered in the parlour after dinner, with nothing in the world to do, and quite content to do it; before "the problems of humanity" began to lie so heavy on men's minds as to make them uneasy in their pleasures; and when they took the goods of life as they came, and tried to think as little as possible about the evil; when to say that it was cruel to shoot a hare or a pheasant would have been thought as absurd as to say that a Frenchman was as good as an Englishman, and to have indicated, in fact, a similar vein of moral obliquity; and when fox-hunter and grouse-shooter, deer-stalker and salmon-fisher, each pursued his favourite amusement without a moment's misgiving, and wholly unsuspecting that he would ever, while the earth continued to revolve upon its axis, be charged with "immorality."—In that delightful period lay the halcyon days of field sports, when no black drop of any kind entered into the sportsman's cup; when, if he shot over his own land, he was conscious of no offence either to man, bird, or beast; or, if he shot over his neighbour's, was unharassed by the consciousness of a host of

\* Vide *Adem Bede*.



competitors, all intriguing to deprive him of his morsel of privilege. The absence of all those jealousies, misgivings, and heartburnings, which deform these latter days, must have made the first of September, we think, forty or fifty years ago, sweeter than it is now. But there are many other differences besides, which all tell in favour of the olden time.

Men had fewer things in those days to distract their thoughts, fewer cares and fewer amusements too—we are speaking, of course, of country people—and the first of September was more of an epoch in their lives than it is now; how carefully prepared for, how eagerly anticipated, how keenly enjoyed! Those were the old days of pointers and setters; of heavy velveteen jackets, and ponderous shooting boots; and of long, long days among the stubbles from almost sunrise to sunset. Some little preparation was really necessary for this kind of work on the part of both biped and quadruped. Some men went so far as to physic themselves; but it was always part of the regular preparation, which began in the middle of August, to gallop your dogs so many miles every day along the turnpike roads to harden their feet. That was what nobody who called himself a sportsman would have omitted to do, and no doubt the animals themselves felt the benefit of it. But we will suppose the eventful morning to have arrived, when an early start is to be made so as to find the birds before they have left the stubbles. You breakfasted at six or perhaps half-past five, and would arrive on your beat at the latest by seven o'clock. Perhaps, as you take the outlying ground first, you have two or three miles to drive to the scene of operations. How fresh, cool, and green everything is, as you wind through the deep lanes, cross a bit of open common, and, turning down a rutty cart track, finally pull up at a barn yard standing by itself in the fields! Here you get down, and after repressing the ecstasies of Turk and Duke—the former a superb black and tan, the latter a pure white dog of the famous Welsh breed—inquire of the old thatcher, who is already pegging away at the newly stacked wheat, what birds he has seen about there lately.

"There be several lots, zur," is the answer. "There be a main strong covey lies moastly round about here. I've put 'em up coming to work more nor once."

"Seen 'em this morning?"

"Noa—I han't seen 'em this morning, but when they goes out o' that stubble they moastly goes to yonder eddish. I think they lies there o' nights,"

Acting on this information it is resolved to take the eddish first, and coming in upon the birds, if still in the stubble, from that direction to cut them off from their usual point; in which case when the covey rises it is much more likely to get scattered—the great object in partridge-shooting. Turning a little way back along the track, and getting through a gap in the hedge, you send off the dogs across the rich green grass which has never been touched since it was mown in June. Carefully they cross and recross it, but without any result; though you discover with delight

a large round patch in the middle of it, which indicates that a large covey have recently been "jugging" there. They must be in the stubble, and thither accordingly you proceed. The hedge which you have to cross, however, for this purpose is rather an awkward one: guns first, then keeper, then dogs. The passage is nearly completed, when Turk, forgetful of discipline, in the excitement of the moment tries to get before his master. The keeper swears: and "whirr, whirr," from the middle of the stubble, away go the birds in safety—an awful example of retribution following quickly on profanity. A man, however, has been set to mark in that direction, and he reports the covey to have settled down in the furthest corner of some rough grass which adjoins the wheat stubble. "Close agen the hedge, sir," says the scout; so you resolve to go one on each side, keeping the dogs, however, on the side where the birds dropped. And now the sport begins. Right away in the corner of the field the grass is very thick and interspersed with clumps of thistle, and when you get within ten yards of the hedge the dogs suddenly stiffen into stone. A step or two forward: whirring and screaming the birds rise out of the grass, and spread out like a fan over your head; some going back to the stubble, some crossing the high hedge into your companion's face, and then making off in the direction of some turnips which are out of bounds. Bang, bang, on each side of the hedge: three birds down: "I missed my first disgracefully," says the man on the other side. "Where are they, Tom?" you inquire of marker, as he gallops up on the pony provided for the purpose. He has marked down four in the stubble, and four or five are gone in the direction of some beans. The rest are out of bounds. You have now, therefore, to follow up the scattered birds; and, after killing a leash out of the stubble, you make for the beans aforesaid. In those days no one stood on ceremony about beans; and the two guns, with the keepers, stalk silently down them. Drawn blank—what a sell! However, there is nothing for it but to hunt the adjoining fields, as they can't have gone far. The next field is a wide pasture field with a few cows in it; but the birds may have lighted on the further side, and the dogs are at once set to beat it while the shooters repose on a stile. Ha! what is that? A point most decidedly. Duke stands firm, and Turk backs him well. Presently the old dog advances cautiously and slowly, and stops again.

"They're settled there and run into the hedge, that's it."

"Get over as softly as you can."

"All right?"

"Yes—go on."

Up gets one bird out of the ditch on your side, and drops dead at thirty yards. The others rise on the other side and give your friend a good cross shot, who this time kills his brace too. And now, this covey being pretty satisfactorily accounted for, it is time to rest for ten minutes, and think about the plan of the campaign. It is half-past nine. You have four brace and a half; and two hours and a half more before

luncheon. You must look round, you decide, for the other birds that lie about this hill before descending through the wood to the low ground beyond. Accordingly, in another quarter of an hour you are again on foot, beating some big fields on the high ground, where the rays of the sun descend rather fiercely on head and shoulders, and the dogs begin to show an unmistakeable craving for water. A few cool swede turnip-leaves, with the dew still on them, are thrust into each man's wideawake, and a muddy pond affords Duke and Turk a draught more delicious than the most perfectly concocted and accurately iced claret cup. Refreshed you go away with renewed vigour. But the sport flags for a time. The scent fades, and two coveys of birds in succession take refuge in the high wood, where it is useless to follow them. A third, however, seems to have settled in some low spring, and these you determine to try for. The keeper is quite right. But they have dropped so close to the high wood, that when they get up you have to take them just as they clear the tops of the trees. Out of three shots, however, you bag two, and think you have done well. The keeper is sure that some of them have skimmed round the side of the wood and have made for some turnips just below; and again his knowledge of fieldcraft is vindicated. Four brace have settled in this cover, and, as the ground is dry, have run about in different directions, so as to show some very pretty work on the dogs' part, and to give six or seven single shots to their masters. You add five to the bag; and then are not sorry to see a small donkey cart at hand, which contains the wished-for lunch. In a meadow below the turnips runs a clear little pebbly brook, and a spur thrown out from the bottom of the wood runs a little way along the bank. To this welcome nook the whole party betake themselves; and, turning out the bag, you find eight brace of partridges, two hares, a rabbit, and a landrail. Very fair by half-past twelve o'clock: and now for luncheon. The dogs are sitting in the brook with only their heads above water; and you almost long to do the same. Beer, however, carries the day against water; and from a small wooden cask, which should always be used on such occasions, you take a pint of fresh, cool, and sparkling home-brewed, which is worth an emperor's ransom. Then comes pigeon pie, or cold fowl, to be followed by a crust and stilton, lending new zest to further inroads on the cask; then a glass of sherry and an apple, perhaps; then a pipe; and then, very probably, a doze. At all events you loll lazily *sub tegmine fagi* for an hour and a half; and then about two o'clock guns and shot pouches are resumed, more ammunition taken in, directions given to the boy where to meet you with the afternoon beer, and off you go again—Duke and Turk in the highest spirits, and ready to jump about like puppies.

The first hour after luncheon is, somehow or other, never very successful. You each of you miss an easy shot. One bird towers and drops in the middle of some gorse where it is impossible to find him. Another is winged, and successfully eludes pursuit in some standing beans. But by three o'clock you have pulled yourselves together: the

scent is improving ; the birds are getting out on the stubbles again ; a refreshing breeze springs up ; and you are "all there" once more. In the next two hours you add six brace to the bag ; and when the cask again arrives at five, there is some question of what the keeper terms "giving out." Friend from town seems doubtful ; but you scorn the proposition. You mean to go back to those turnips—lots of birds gone back in that direction—then into old Sickles's wheat stubble, and round by those bean-shocks, a favourite place for birds at that time of day. The cask by this time is getting rather low, and you all move off in good spirits. The turnips yield a leash and a nice leveret. In the stubble the dogs unfortunately blunder into a covey, part of which, however, makes for the aforesaid bean-shocks ; and this little field of not more than three acres you find full of odd birds. Men often shoot best about this time of day, and you cut them down as they dart between the dusky shocks in great style. Out of nine shots you bag seven ; a couple of rabbits yield up their lives besides ; and when you emerge from the field your bag altogether is nineteen brace of birds, three hares, three rabbits, and the landrail. "I shan't load again," says friend. "I think it's time to give out," says keeper. You have a hankering after twenty brace ; but are assured at once that nineteen sounds better—so you listen to reason, and are soon on your way home through the lovely September evening, through lanes and woods,

Amid whose leafy sprays  
And tall gray stems the green light gently plays ;

past road-side cottages with their gardens, and orchards, and beehives ; past fields of dark green turnips and tawny silky-looking stubbles ; across the old bridge, up the opposite hill, and down into the familiar village nestling under wooded slopes and basking peaceably in the sunset. You stagger into the kitchen ; have your shooting-boots removed ; stumble upstairs to wash ; limp down again to the soup and sherry, and the saddle, not forgetting a further reinforcement from another cool cask down below ; and after a bottle of Burgundy, a cup of coffee, and a cigar, roll happily to bed, and sleep like an infant till breakfast-time.

This is the first of September, old style, which is not, however, yet wholly obsolete ; many such days the present writer has enjoyed, though still on the sunny side of life, and hopes to enjoy many more. The new style may be much more briefly disposed of. You breakfast between nine and ten ; lounge about for an hour, smoking, till the men who have been asked arrive ; and, when the party of five or six is complete, sally forth under the guidance of head-keeper and colleagues, attended by three or four retrievers. There is no hunting for birds at all. You simply walk from turnip field to turnip field, shooting at the birds which rise before you, but seldom, if ever, going back, and leaving the wounded to the retrievers. What we complain of in the style of shooting is that it is totally devoid of incident : no hunting for scattered birds ; no opportunity

of studying the habits of the partridge; no surprises; none of the nervous excitement created by a good point; none of the interest which attaches to the movements of two really clever dogs; none of that sympathy between biped and quadruped which is one of the great charms of the old style. You go on from field to field marching with military precision, and, if the shooting is good, killing a great quantity of birds; but the monotony soon wearies one, and perhaps the luxurious luncheons provided on these occasions are a necessary stimulant. Champagne, claret cup, venison pasty, Strashburgh pie, ice, pines, and peaches form a banquet which is not discussed in five minutes; and the afternoon shooting seldom begins before three; it is sometimes carried on till six, but oftentimes is broken off at five; one man having letters to write; another wanting to play billiards; another to resume the flirtation which was so rudely interrupted in the morning; and another, very likely, tired of the whole thing, as well he may be. Partridge-shooting of this kind is not sport, but mere pastime—a very different thing indeed; and four or five hours of it is enough for anybody.

We promised our readers, in conclusion, to say something of the drawbacks to this sport, of which some are matters of feeling, and others of fact. They will be estimated differently by different people, but they must all be glanced at in an article on shooting. We will first take the drawback which may be thought to exist in the ill-feeling which it sometimes creates among farmers; and this is of two kinds. There is, first, the annoyance which they feel at the injury inflicted on their crops by hares and rabbits; and, secondly, the dislike of the system of preserving altogether, which some few of them entertain. The first objection is, of course, a very real and substantial one; but we believe it is gradually disappearing, owing to the growing practice on the part of landlords of allowing their tenants to kill the ground game. The second we believe to be confined to a very small class; but, undoubtedly, there are farmers who dislike the presence of the gamekeeper on their farms, and silently resent the reservation of the game at all. This is quite a new feeling in the country, unknown even twenty years ago, and not at all prevalent now. But where it exists, it must certainly detract somewhat from the full enjoyment of the sport. It seems to us an unreasonable feeling, we confess; for landlord and tenant cannot both have the game. And if one must be preferred, it certainly ought to be the former, for reasons we shall presently adduce. Next comes the drawback which is created by the crime of poaching—the murderous conflicts which it provokes between keepers and marauders, and the demoralisation of the peasantry of which it is said to be the cause. It is sometimes urged that if game were made property, and placed on the same footing as ducks and chickens, all difficulty about the game laws would cease; by which, we suppose, is meant that all sentimental sympathy with the poacher on the part of the public would then cease, that he would sink to the level of the common thief, and that nobody would raise any objection to the execution of the

laws against him. This may be; but merely to call partridges and pheasants by another name would not change their habits. They would still hold out temptations to dishonesty much greater than birds which are secured in farm-yards. They would still require to be watched as they are now, and the same struggle would ensue in the effort to arrest thieves. Game, nevertheless, virtually is property; and the owner, in protecting it, is doing no more than he does in protecting his spoons and forks. All property is more or less a temptation to crime. And the simple answer to the objection drawn from poaching is that, if it is good to have game for other reasons, it cannot be wrong because a particular class of thieves, called poachers, make a business of stealing it. We have a right to protect one kind of property as well as another; and if any such change as we have here mentioned would contribute to this view of the subject being universally adopted, by all means let us have it. Robbed of all the moral support which it still partially derives from an ignorant prejudice on the subject, poaching would certainly diminish, and what there was of it would be more easily dealt with. Game dealers who bought of poachers would then become receivers of stolen goods, and one source of the poacher's profits would become less productive, if not dried up altogether. Next comes the question of cruelty; and of course it must be allowed that wounded birds and animals who live some hours after being shot do suffer a great deal of pain. But, as far as partridge-shooting is concerned, we are convinced there is very much less of it than people may suppose who have no experience of the sport. In the first place, very few birds are ever lost where men and dogs are fairly up to their work. In the second place, of those that are, the vast majority have only a broken wing; and that this produces no agony or prolonged torture is shown by the fact that birds in this state constantly rejoin the covey, are found feeding with them immediately afterwards, and, on being killed even a week later, show little or no falling off in condition. Of the exceedingly small residuum of birds that are shot in the body, and not picked up by the sportsman, we don't believe that one in twenty lives for half an hour, while those who do are soon put out of their misery by a stoat or a weasel. Thus it will be seen that the torture inflicted by partridge-shooting is reduced within a very narrow compass. And when we consider that birds shot dead experience an euthanasia compared with birds which are caught in a net, and have their necks wrung, we shall be obliged to own that on the whole, and setting one thing against another, the objection to partridge-shooting on the score of cruelty cannot be sustained.

Such being the principal drawbacks to the sport of shooting, what is there to be said in its favour as part of the system of field sports established in this country? We shall not press the argument that it keeps up a resident gentry; because there are people who believe that country gentlemen are a great evil, deserving to be trapped, shot, and nailed up against barn-doors, far more richly than polecats, crows, or magpies.



Others, again, will have it that, if nothing but field sports will induce them to reside on their estates, they are not worthy to possess them. But to waive these exacerbating topics, and granting for the sake of argument that field sports are a mere "survival," destined to gradual extermination, we may still consider whether under existing circumstances they do not fulfil a useful function. There are, in fact, two reasons, and of the most opposite character, which seem to make the continuance of field sports desirable. One is the apparently ineradicable propensity of the human race to settle their disputes by war; the other the enervating effects of advancing civilisation, to which field sports serve the purpose of an antidote. As long as the innate ferocity of mankind, on the one hand, makes it necessary that we should be able to defend ourselves, and the relaxing effect of an artificial life, upon the other, makes it necessary that we should have recourse to tonics, so long, it seems to us, ought field sports to be carefully cherished by all who prize either national independence or moral health. That they keep up habits of hardihood which make every sportsman half a soldier is a truism too obvious to be dwelt upon, though it is often unaccountably forgotten. And what is still more important is that in England these habits of hardihood are chiefly acquired by the class from which our officers are taken. The moral effect which is produced upon a regiment of soldiers by seeing in its officers the hardiest and boldest men in the whole corps, the most ready in emergencies, and the most fertile in resources, as well as the best instructed in the art of war, is simply incalculable; and all these qualities are specially developed by field sports. Above everything is it necessary that such qualities should exist in the officers of a citizen army, liable to be suddenly called away from peaceful occupations, to meet a disciplined enemy. War may be a mark of brutality. We have nothing to do with that. But while it exists we must be ready for it; and one of the best preparations for campaigning are the sports of the field. All our men cannot, of course, have the benefit of such training; but let us not at least be such madmen as to grudge it to those who can, and to those who are to lead the others. On the other hand, the conditions of modern civilisation, tending as they do to accumulate our population in large towns, and to foster a kind of hothouse life which forces the intellect at the expense of the bodily faculties, should be a warning to us not to throw away lightly any means which we possess at present for promoting the union of the *corpus sanum* with the *mens sana*, and of maintaining the healthy balance of all the elements of our nature.

## A Human Sacrifice.

### I.

"COMPLETELY ruined! Half the rice-fields are foot-deep of silt, and the stream tearing over the meadows, ploughing them into furrows that would bury a buffalo. When I came up from the ford this morning, the paddy stalks were as tall as my waist, and in another week the crop would have been ready for the sickle; and now there is scarcely a standing reed left in the whole township. I tell you, neighbour Nenko, the village will be brought to starvation."

"And whom have we to blame for that but ourselves?" growled Nenko. "If the gods had got their due, such calamities, I warrant, had never overtaken us. The Earth-goddess has asked in vain for a sacrifice. Two cold seasons have come and gone since blood was shed in the Meriah Grove, and Tari could not but be angry with us."

"Very true," returned Beer, shaking his head gloomily; "all our disasters have come upon us since Kowar bilked the axe and ran off to the jungle. And what amends did we then make to the goddess? Two lives would have been little enough to appease Tari for that insult, and yet, though two seasons have passed away, not a single victim has been tied to the stake. What wonder, then, that the goddess should give us over to the snake and the tiger, and wash our rice-fields down to the plains!"

"Ay, our troubles all began with Kowar's running away. It was only a month or two after that the plague took our cattle, and that Nobghon and his two sons were devoured by tigers in the wood below the pass. Next year, too, the whole village was laid down with fever, and a water-spout destroyed the early rice; and now comes this flood upon us. It will be well if this is the worst that is in store for us."

"Well indeed! But what good can we expect at the goddess's hands? Did not Tari Pennu shed her own blood that the earth might become hard and fruitful, and produce food for us and our children? and did she not ask us to pay her back again in blood? I say that while that girl walks the village, it is a reproach to our religion and a dishonour to Tari."

"See there," cried Nenko, "how the flood comes foaming down the ravine! The hurling rumble of the stones that are being whirled along deadens even the noise of the thunder. What if the waters were to dam the channel with rock and shingle at that rapid turn there under the War-god's Rock? We should be swept down to the plains, houses and all, brother Beer."

"What better does our impiety deserve?" said Beer, with a gloomy shake of his head. "We have taken to living without the gods. How can we ask Tari to do aught for us, if we will do nothing for her? My mind is, Nenko, that unless that girl be speedily sacrificed, worse disasters will befall us."

"Yes, but how are we to persuade the Abbaya of this? The old man is as foolishly fond of the Meriah girl as if she were his own daughter, and always ready to grasp at any excuse for saving her a little longer. The village wives, too, all love her so well that none of them like to push him. And now he says the English Sahibs are against Meriahs, and he is afraid of angering them by sacrificing the girl."

"And will the Sahibs stand between us and the wrath of the goddess, when she is hungry for blood and denied it? Will they pull out the fangs of the serpent, and draw the teeth of the tiger? Will they save our cattle from disease, and shield our corn from blight? If the Sahibs would defend us from Tari's wrath, there might be some justice in their interfering; but till then they must leave us to make our peace with the goddess after the fashion of our fathers."

"What care they?" said Nenko; "they have no knowledge of religion. It is not they whom the Holy Mother will punish when she is denied a victim; we shall have to bear the brunt of her anger. It is very well for them to say that human sacrifices are cruel; but how are we to fill the mouths of our children and keep our cattle from harm, if we disobey the law of the goddess?"

"See, that lightning flash that broke right over the Meriah Grove!" cried Beer, with a shudder, as he clutched the other by the arm. "That spoke the mind of Tari plain enough. She asks for a victim; and may a tiger tear me next time I enter the jungle, if I do not give her one before the new-moon feast pass over!"

"I am sorry for Beena, too," said Nenko; "she has been the daughter of the whole village, and the elder sister of our children. I would almost as soon strike down my own little Joree as see her fall beneath the axe. She is so loving and gentle, and thoughtful for every one's welfare, that it is like cutting our own flesh to give her to the goddess."

"And how can we help it?" said Beer, with a sigh. "The decree is of the Mother's making. Is it not now nearly two years since we gave one to Tari? Besides, the girl will be a goddess, and be for ever happy and glorious, while our own daughters must drudge at grinding corn, and endure the pains of childbirth."

"Yes, it is her doom; and it were better that she should die at once than ruin overtake us all. See, now, where that big rock, loosened by the water, comes crashing down the ravine like a jungle bull that has been struck by an arrow. Oh, Pidzu Pennu, god of rain! take away your torrents, or in two hours more the village will be washed down the passes."

The speakers, Nenko and Beer, two Khond husbandmen, were standing under the shelter of a cattle-shed, at the end of the village of

Taricotta, looking out upon the havoc which a September hurricane was making of their rice-fields and pasture-lands. Taricotta lies in a lovely dingle of the Khond highlands, high up among the Eastern Ghats. In the middle of an amphitheatre of hills, thickly clad with bamboo forest, and studded here and there with tall clumps of *sāl* and *sisu*, the village stands upon a small *parterre*, slightly higher than the bottom of the valley. Round about, the streams come pouring down from the heights, cleaving the hill-sides into wedge-like masses as their channels converge towards the bottom, where the waters unite to form the Tarinulla, or river of Tari, which, breaking through a narrow gorge at the east end of the valley, plunges down the glens of Boad, and winding its way through the jungles of Duspulla, joins the Mahanuddee as it rolls towards the Bay of Bengal. In the centre of the valley was Taricotta, and spreading out from it on all sides lay the village rice-fields, a low ridge of earth about a foot high marking the bounds of each family's holding. The village itself consisted of two rows of low houses, built of wattle-and-dab, and thatched with grass or rice-straw, all of them of the same size and of the same pattern. Towards the banks of the river, almost on a level with its bed, was a broad tract of rich black meadow loam, that grew crops such as none of the neighbouring valleys could raise, and which was at once the boast of Taricotta and the envy of the other Khond communities round about. The only drawback about this land was that its low level rendered it liable to be flooded at unseasonable times; but the husbandmen had been peculiarly lucky in saving their crops until within a year or two back that they had suffered heavy losses; and the wiser heads of the village had no difficulty in accounting for this change in their fortunes.

Until of late, Taricotta had been as famous in the Khond country for its piety as for its prosperity. In no village had the cravings of Tari, the Earth-goddess, for human blood been more liberally gratified, as became a place that bore her sacred name. Every year the Meriah Grove, on the slope of the hill beyond the ford, had been reddened with the blood of one and sometimes more human victims. Every year, when Nobin, the *Panwa*, or village weaver, was sent down to the plains to purchase Meriahs, a heavy bag of rupees was entrusted to him, and he was charged, for the honour of the goddess and for the credit of the valley, to bring back the finest boy and the fairest girl that money could purchase.

"Why should we deal stingily with our Mother?" the Abbaya would say, when sitting with the village elders in committee of supply on such occasions. "Has she not done more for us than for any village on the hills? Do not our fields show heavy rice-ears, while those of Tintilkote bear nought but thorns? Have we not cattle in our woods, while the people of Bhoomghur have only tigers? Let us, then, offer to the goddess the best that we can get, and she may give us still more cause to be thankful."

"Ay, ay," the old *Janni*, or priest, would mumble through his toothless jaws, "the goddess likes red blood. When the soil was only soft sand and mud, and would grow nothing, the goddess opened her veins, and where the warm drops fell it grew hard and fruitful. Then she said to the people, 'Even as I have shed my blood to serve you, so with your blood do ye worship me back again!' And when they said, in reply, 'Oh, Mother! we are but few, and if we have to spill our own blood for you, even your favour will not make us happy,' the Mother said, 'Ye shall buy the children of the stranger, and spill their blood in my grove, and I shall abide with you.' Wherefore, friends, let us obey the goddess, and see, oh weaver! that the men of Tintilkote, or those of Bhoomghur, do not outbid you, and buy the favour of Tari over our heads; but bring home with you such Meriahs as shall keep up our repute among the tribes, and gain us grace in the eyes of the goddess."

But the Panwa's commission was becoming every year more difficult of execution. Formerly, those who had stolen children to dispose of, or those who through want were compelled to part with their own offspring, would keep them in hand for months until the Panwa of Taricotta came down to the plains to buy victims for the sacrifice. Then, his only difficulty was in making choice among the numbers that were offered to him. Now, however, the English had stretched out their hands over the hills, and ordered the Rajahs to stop the Meriah sacrifices, while the people of the plains were forbidden to sell their children, and threats of severe punishment held out to all who dared to disobey. So the Panwa had gone twice to the plains and come back empty-handed; and the last time he told the village council that he would not go down again although they made a Meriah of himself, for the English Magistrate Sahib had sworn to hang him if he ever came back on such an errand.

In the good old times Taricotta had always been able to keep five or six victims in reserve, lest the goddess should evince any sudden displeasure against the village, but now there was only one left, and the Panwa had not the faintest idea how others were to be procured. And how was the world, or that part of it at least which the Khonds were concerned with, to go on without Meriahs? The villagers talked gloomily of what might be looked for from the wrath of Tari, and how the goddess would most likely take themselves if they could not find her other victims.

Moreover, on the last occasion when the villagers gathered together at the Meriah Grove, there took place an ominous event such as had never before been known in Taricotta. The proposed victim was the last Meriah but one remaining: a tall, handsome, well-made youth, who had been bought by the Panwa when an infant, and brought up in the village to be a scape-goat for the sins of its inhabitants. Never had Taricotta made grander preparations for a Meriah, for Kowar was a favourite with all the men and women of the village; and the simple people were bent on softening, as they thought, the blow to the victim, by immolating him with as much pomp and ostentation as they could well afford.

Up to the last moment everything had been propitious. Kowar's long locks were duly shorn, and some days after he was led forth in triumphal procession, crowned with flowers and smelling of perfumes, to the Meriah Grove, where the people fed him with sweetmeats and with their choicest dainties, and worshipped him as one that had been consecrated to Tari, and that was himself soon to become a god. Kowar sat by the stake enthroned among flowers, and bright cloths, and tinsel, and looked around him with the forced calmness of fanaticism, bearing up his courage with the thought of how small were the miseries of his present condition compared with the bliss and glory into which he was about to enter. What cared he for the agony of death? Any man in the village might have to suffer as much when the tribe went down the valley to fight the men of Bhoomghur. And was he not about to become a god at once, a god ever happy and strong, and with the power to bend the creatures of earth to his will? And while other souls must repair to the far distant Rock of Leaping, whereon sits Dinga Pennu, the judge of the dead, and be dashed by the boisterous waves against its sharp corners before they get a sure footing on its slippery surface, his soul, purified from earthly uncleanness, would at once take to itself a divine substance. Other undeserving souls would be liable to be sent back to this world of probation, to be born, blind or lame perhaps, and to undergo another life of toil and sorrow, of cold and hunger. But his bliss would be everlasting. Why did they not strike then? Why should the blow linger that was to free him from the troubles of earth and make him one of the bright gods? But the ritual was long and might not be abridged, and the men of the village, many of them half-intoxicated with stupifying drugs, were leaping in wild dance round about the stake, brandishing axe and spear and shouting the praises of Tari and the merits of the victim. But what, thought Kowar—as he sat there looking upon a scene which seemed to him more of a wild vision than of an actual reality in which he himself was playing a horrible part—what if all that he had been told were lies, and he was not to become a god after all? Perhaps it was all a make-up, to get the victims to quietly consent to the sacrifice. The worshippers of Boora Pennu, the Sun-god, said so at any rate, and why should they not know as much about the matter as the people of Taricotta? The thought that he might have been tricked and deluded with old wives' tales flashed like a pang of pain through Kowar's mind; and as he roused himself and looked round, the earth seemed to have put on a beauty that he had never noticed before. Was there anything as fair in the heaven that they promised him, as that tamarind grove stretching away up the hill of Loha Pennu, the iron god of war? or could all the music of the gods be a sweeter sound than the dashing murmurs of the streams as they poured down the mountain sides? And there was Becna, a Meriah like himself, standing apart under a *nim* tree. What goddess could be more beautiful than she was? And she was weeping—weeping for him too!



"My fathers," said Kowar, suddenly raising his head, "I give my life to save you from the snake and the tiger. I shall be a god, and as ye would wish for my favour then, grant me my last wish."

The men paused in their dance, and the Abbaya and the priest went forward to the stake, with low obeisance to the victim.

"Until this day," he continued, "I have always joined in the dances of the village. Loose my hands, I entreat you, for a little, and let me mix in your mirth, with axe and spear in hand, as a man should."

At a request so unusual, the Abbaya and the priest looked doubtfully at each other, while all around held their peace.

"His locks are shorn," said the priest at length; "he is in the hands of the goddess. It is with her voice that he speaks, and he cannot be gainsayed."

They loosed Kowar from the stake, and the Abbaya put his own axe and spear into the youth's hand, while a great cup of liquor, distilled from the *Mhowa* flower, was handed him to drink. He took his place in the circle; the Panwa tuned his pipe to its highest pitch, and with a loud shout, the dancers set off with wilder gestures and a more rapid whirl than before, Kowar whooping loudest of all. After they had circled the stake three or four times, of a sudden, before any one could stretch out a hand to stay him, Kowar tripped up the two men who stood next him in the ring, plunged through a group of women and children, and before the dancers could collect their senses, had forded the river and was making for the forest. Each man mechanically raised his spear, to hurl after him, but held his hand when he saw the throng of wives and daughters that the wiles of the fugitive had interposed between himself and his intending slayers.

"Chase! chase!" shouted at once the Abbaya and the priest; but, before the pursuers had started, Kowar was already lost sight of in the jungle; and though the villagers watched the passes, and hunted for him three nights and days, he managed to outwit them, and to reach the villages of the people of Boora Pennu, the Sun-god, who abhor the Meriah rite, and refused to deliver up the victim.

A gloom thus fell upon the village of Taricotta, for every one knew that so untoward an event must be the forerunner of evil; and for two years from the time of Kowar's escape, they had no heart to offer another victim to the Earth-goddess in the Meriah Grove.

## II.

Half-a-score of years before, the Panwa had come back to Taricotta, bringing with him, among other children for the Meriah sacrifice, a girl of such loveliness as had never before been seen in the village or in any of the valleys round about. He had paid for her the value of fifteen bullocks, ten sheep, and seven sets of brass pots, the highest price that Taricotta had ever given for a Meriah. He was almost afraid, the Panwa

said, to tell the village council of his extravagance. But the rice had been plentiful that year, and all the cows had calved, so the elders had ratified the bargain, and took good care that all the country round should know the price which they had paid, if indeed they did not add a few more cattle and sheep, at no greater cost than their own veracity. The girl was put in the patriarch's house, and treated with all the kindness which was considered to be the due of one consecrated to the goddess. No people were kinder at heart than the villagers of Taricotta. It was not their fault that the goddess delighted in human blood; it was their misfortune that her law compelled them to gratify this cruel appetite. So Beena grew up the daughter of the village; and the thought of the terrible end that was in store for a life so pure, and spotless, and loving, drew towards her the kindly hearts of the simple Khond husbandmen and their wives. Though her home was with the Abbaya, in his house in the centre of the village, distinguished from the other dwellings by a great gnarled cotton-tree before the door, under which was held the council of the elders, Beena was as welcome to every home in Taricotta as if she had been a child of the house. Was it not for them, they reasoned, that she was going to lay down her life, that plenty might abound in the village, and their children be kept from the snake and the tiger? Ought they not, then, to soften her hard fate by every kindness that they could show her? And when she became a goddess, would it not be in her power to return their favours to them tenfold? Thus Beena never heard a harsh word from any mouth in Taricotta, and the surliest churl felt constrained to force his face into a smile when he met the Meriah maiden. Even the *Janni*, the old priest, who never let his eyes see any other woman or child in the village, could not pass Beena without patting her on the head and blessing her in the name of Tari; and she alone of all the village was permitted to enter his house and put the holy disorder and untidiness that reigned there to rights. Once, when Bhim, the son of Gopal, the herdsman, an ill-conditioned lad who was always in mischief, had beaten the Meriah girl, and sent her crying home to the Abbaya's, important as was the office which his father held in Taricotta, the youth had been driven forth from the village, with a warning that if he ever again showed his face in the valley, his days would not be long in the land. It was a curious pride and delight that Taricotta took in Beena, the Meriah, and the villagers could hardly tell whether they felt more glad at possessing so noble a sacrifice to offer to Tari, or sorry that they must put away from them, by a cruel death, one who had so twined herself round their hearts, and whose presence shed so much love and light upon their homes.

The shadow of the sacrifice that hung over Beena's life had made her from childhood unlike other girls. Other children lived for themselves, or for their mothers and brothers and sisters, but she lived for them all. Her life, she felt, belonged to Taricotta; and the weals and the woes of the village, its luck and its disasters, all peculiarly affected her in her own

person. The village and its inhabitants, the green hills and the clear streams round about were in a sense her own, for was it not by her blood that the people would thrive and be happy, the fields grow yellow with heavy crops of grain, and the streams provide clear, cool water to refresh the panting cattle in the hot months before the rains. She who was to die for all, ought also to live for all, and need not care much for herself. Her feelings were all those of a woman whose path in life is clearly marked out, not those of a girl whose golden future flutters before her in light and uncertain guise. When Beena played with the other children of her own years, she made herself believe that it was not for her own amusement, but to please them. When there was sickness and death in any house, Beena was there to soothe the sufferers and comfort the bereaved, for was not their distress her own? She shared her own meals with Derah, the childless widow, who had no son to reap her field, and no daughter to pound her rice. She scrambled unharmed through the thick jungles on the War-god's hill—for no tiger would dare to open his lips, or snake shoot out its fangs at a life sacred to Tari—to gather fresh, juicy berries and wild flowers for Nenko's cripple daughter, who was shut up in the hot house, and could get none of these things for herself. The people all knew that she did not do those kind deeds of her own forethought—for what forethought could a girl of her years possess?—but that they came of the impulse of the goddess working in her; and it would have been impious to thwart or contradict her.

Once, when the men of Taricotta went down to the plains below the pass, to fight with those of Tintilkote, and the women accompanied them to carry arrows and gather stones, according to the usual custom, Beena, the Meriah, went with the rest. But after the fray began, instead of doing what she could to help the men of her village, like the other women, she sat apart on a bank, moaning and wringing her hands as she witnessed the blood flow and the cruel blows that were struck on both sides. But when the old Abbaya of Taricotta, who had been a father and protector to her since she came to the village, was struck down, and she saw his grey hairs rolling in the dust, while a huge Tintilkote warrior stood with foot pressed upon the old man's breast, and axe uplifted, ready to strike, the fury of a tigress seemed suddenly to seize the girl. She rushed forward, snatched a spear from the hands of a Taricotta man, who was standing dismayed at the downfall of his chief, and before any one could stir for astonishment, thrust it with all her strength into the big man of Tintilkote's breast, who fell down with a groan, scarcely able to believe that any harm had happened to him from such a quarter. Then she had sat down, and taken the Abbaya's head in her lap, heedless that the men of Tintilkote were gathering round her with savage threats of vengeance, equally heedless that those of Taricotta, inspired by her example with a sudden accession of courage, had rushed forward with a wild yell, broken the ranks of the enemy, and were driving them from the field, leaving her to chafe the Abbaya's grey hairs,

and to bathe his wrinkled brows with her tears. So crushing was this defeat, and so many right arms did the Taricotta men bring home with them on their spears, that the Tintilkote heroes had never again taken the field; and the people of Taricotta persuaded themselves still more firmly that Beena was filled with the spirit of the goddess.

The Abbaya in whose house Beena had been brought up was a lone man. His wife was dead before Beena had come to the village, and one of her earliest memories was of him coming back from a fight with the men of Bhoomghur, leaving his two brave sons dead on the field. She saw the Abbaya stride stoutly through the village at the head of the men, the Panwa piping fiercely before him; and but for the firm grasp with which he held his spear, crushing almost the tough bamboo shaft, and the hard way in which his lips and teeth were set, no one could have guessed the wound which that day's fighting had left in his heart. It was not until he came into his own house, and saw how lonely it was, with Sham's sickle hanging upon the wall, and Leanga's hunting spear leaning against the corner, never more to be used by their old masters, that the Abbaya suffered his grief to escape him in a groan of anguish, which was speedily followed by tears and sobs when the little girl stole timidly on to his knee, and putting her small arms about his neck, kissed his great beard and rough weather-beaten face. The Abbaya clutched her to his bosom, and then held her back on his knee at arms' length; and as he looked intently into the deep hazel eyes, full of loving sorrow for his loss, he heaved a sigh from the bottom of his heart as he thought that even of this sole remaining comfort he must soon be deprived by the decree of Tari. From that hour the Abbaya had loved Beena as tenderly as ever father loved child.

Until the time came when Beena was the only Meriah left in the village, and the difficulty arose about finding fresh victims, the Abbaya had been a staunch supporter of the cruel worship of Tari. No one had more loudly condemned the faint-heartedness of the patriarchs of neighbouring villages, who had given in to the wishes of the English, and had pledged themselves to sacrifice only buffaloes in future, instead of human beings. The Abbaya of Taricotta had neversought to conceal his scorn of such time-servers, and he had been wont to boldly declare that Tari should never be left to thirst for blood in her favourite valley. So long as other victims were available, the Abbaya had been firm enough in upholding the Meriah sacrifice, but now that there was none left except Beena, it was easy to see that a change had come over him. Who, he now argued, were they that they should set themselves up against the will of the English Sahibs—to which all the chiefs in the country, the Rajahs and the Maharajahs, were compelled to bow? Every village was giving up the Meriah sacrifice now-a-days, and why should Taricotta get itself into trouble by standing out? True, Tari might be angry with them, but there were other enemies fully nearer at hand who would be as dangerous, if they were enraged. The goddess might blight their

crops and smite their cattle, with plague, but then the English, if they were displeased, could come up the passes, burn the village and carry away the people to prison, as they had already done in Goomsur, and in Boad; and when grumblers reminded him of how he had once vowed to place his breast before the English bayonets rather than give up the sacrifice to the goddess, the old man could only shrug his shoulders and go away. He had formed no sceptical views regarding the efficacy of the Meriah offering. He believed devoutly in Tari, and had little doubt in his own mind that misery would overtake Taricotta if the goddess were denied her due. His pride too was touched that a village which had plumed itself so much upon its piety as Taricotta had, should yield to innovations which Tintilkote and Bhoombhur had led the way in accepting. It was only his love for Beena that ever made him waver in his duty; and if it had not been her turn to go to the stake, the old man would have unflinchingly kept up the ritual, and have defied the English, and their orders so long as his arm was able to wield a spear in the pass in honour of the goddess and of Taricotta.

But now even the men of his own village were turning against him, and the Abbaya could not but feel that his footing was growing far from firm. When Kowar ran away from the stake, many of the people had thought that Beena should then have been offered up; and the Abbaya had had some difficulty in resisting their demands on the pretence that the propitious season for sacrifice had been allowed to pass over while they were in pursuit of the fugitive. Then next year, when it was noticed that the bamboos in the forest were putting forth flowers—a certain sign of coming famine and pestilence, as all knew,—they had again pushed the Abbaya to consent to the sacrifice of Beena; and though he had promised to make the necessary preparations, it was well known that he bribed the priest to declare that no Meriah would be acceptable to the goddess that year. Observant people could not help marking that soon after this statement three of the best haunches of venison killed during the season found their way from the patriarch's to the priest's house; and they knew it was not for nothing that such attention was paid to the Janni.

Certain it was at all events that the Abbaya was using every possible pretext for putting off the sacrifice of Beena, and the villagers hinted among themselves that he would not be loth to take her altogether out of the hands of the goddess, if he thought that people would put up with such impiety; nay it was said that he would not be sorry if the English Macpherson Sahib, who down below the Ghats was despatching his agents all over the hills to save the Meriahs and keep the people from sacrificing, were to hear about Beena, and send up his men to save her. And thus it was not much wonder though the pious people of Taricotta were displeased with their headman, and apprehensive of what might befall them from the wrath of the goddess.

## III.

At the time of Kowar's escape, Beena was nearly fifteen years of age. She was tall, shapely, and well developed, with massive but finely moulded limbs, a full bust and squarely cut shoulders, which carried a lithe, arching neck, and gracefully set head. But for the liquid depths of her eyes, and the light of love and gentleness that shone out from them, the broad brow from which her hair rose up with a curl that seemed to ask for a coronet to make it lie smoothly down, the firm cheek-bones, the thin lips curving downwards at the corners, and the full bold sweep of her chin, would have stamped her as haughty and imperious; and she might have been so, but for the influence which her consecration to the goddess had exerted upon her nature. There was no woman in Taricotta or in any of the valleys whose beauty could at all compare with that of Beena. Those who had seen the wives of the Boad Rajah, whose beauty had been vaunted over the hill country, declared that the prettiest of them was to Beena as an owl to a pea-hen; and Madhwa, the potter, who had once been as far as the Temple of Jaganath, far beyond the floods of the Nerbudda, testified that none of the damsels who danced before the god, though they were arrayed in brocade and scarlet, and wore bangles and nose-rings of solid gold, had half the presence and beauty of Beena. The Panwa had made a song about her, in which, after he had of course likened her eyes to the lotus, and her face to the full moon, her nose to the *sesamum* flower, and her lips to the young mango leaf, he soared to the highest flight of which Khond fancy was capable, by comparing the majesty and grace of Beena's walk to the gait of a drunken elephant. And next to the song of the praises of Tari and that about the great fight in which the men of Taricotta slew the Abbaya of Bhoomghur and carried off his cattle, this Song of Beena was a favourite at all the village gatherings.

When Beena was twelve years of age, there had been a talk among the elders of marrying her to Kowar, who was the handsomest youth in the village, as she was the fairest maiden. It was quite common for the people of Taricotta to allow the Meriah victims to marry with each other, for the children that came of such unions were also sacred to the goddess, and saved the village the price of purchasing others. When the matter was first mentioned to Beena, she blushed and hesitated, for Kowar was her favourite among all the young men, but when they told her that her children would be Meriahs also, her woman's nature had spoken up strongly.

"Never," she said, with a shudder. "I shall never marry. It is a cruel law. My life is the goddess's, and I yield it cheerfully for you all; but I shall not bring forth little ones for the bloody axe. I shall never marry."

And though Kowar, who had fewer scruples, pressed her sorely until her heart was almost like to break, Beena held fast by this resolution.



When at last it came to Kowar's turn to lay down his life, Beena would gladly have proved her love for him by taking his place at the stake, but the youth roughly said that he no longer cared to live since she would not make him happy in another way. The Abbaya, too, who perhaps was not sorry that there would be no one, now that Kowar was out of the way, to divide Beena's love with himself, also chid her for such an offer, and hinted that she might not be so ready when her own time came—a harsh word, repented of as soon as uttered. So Beena had followed the sacrificial procession, not daring to wait to see the death-blow fall, but yet lingering as long as possible within sight of her lover. Bitter pangs of grief seemed to be rending her own breast asunder, and her tears were falling fast as she stood beneath a *nim* tree, endeavouring to comfort herself by the thought of how soon she would follow Kowar, and how happy they would be when united together as god and goddess, with children, perhaps, who would be celestial like themselves, and free from all fear of the cruel axe. What next ensued seemed like a dream, and when she had stood for a few minutes with eyes strained after the fugitive until he was lost in the jungle, she threw herself on the ground in a fit of hysterical weeping, conscious only that Kowar had escaped, and that she was impious enough to rejoice at the event.

One evening when the sun was sinking low upon the hill-tops and the shadows were creeping down the valley towards the mouth of the pass, changing the bright green shades of pasture to a dark olive colour, Beena had strayed far up a glen to gather berries for the Abbaya's supper. By the edge of a still pool, which lay black and cool before her, screened by a leafy net-work from the hot sunbeams, the girl sat in a reverie, mechanically dipping the ends of the flowers which she had gathered in the water. She was thinking of many things, and trying to think the best and the brightest thoughts about everything. She thought how hard and dark was life in the village below her; how difficult it sometimes was for the people to scrape a subsistence from the soil when the brazen heavens above would not yield one drop of moisture, or the iron earth open its pores to let the green blade come through; and when cattle were perishing with thirst on the pastures, and the men of Tintilkote, or of Bhoomghur, were threatening the village with fire and sword, would she be able to do anything to soften their rough lot when she was slain and had become a goddess? Such a prospect was the chief happiness of Beena's lot. Her fate forbade that she should dream of a long life on earth with blessings of wedded love and delights of children, but her heart still clung to her kind, and her chief pleasure was to think of what she, when a goddess, would do for the earth and its inhabitants, especially for Taricotta, the valley and the people.

Then she began to wonder what had become of Kowar, poor Kowar! who doubtless was pursued by the wrath of the goddess for having cheated her of a life. He too might have been a god, and for ever happy with her, if he only had had faith and firmness. But in the heaven of Tari

she would still be mindful of Kowar, and try to turn from him the wrath of the goddess. She would hover unseen about him in his wanderings, and scare the tiger from his path, and rouse him as the snake crept near him when slumbering in the shade. She would cause dreams of herself to pass through his sleep, and put visions of her new glory and brightness under his closed eyelids. And even as she was thinking of Kowar, the thick grass rustled on the other side of the ravine, the green boughs parted, and Kowar stood before her in all the vigorous robustness of forest freedom, his cheeks tanned by sun and wind, a keen proud glance in his eyes which she had never marked when he lived in the village. A kilt of dressed antelope skin was round his loins, and carelessly thrown over his shoulders was the coat of a young leopard. He carried a gun in one hand and held up the other to impose caution on Beena.

"Kowar!" cried the girl, springing to her feet with a glad look in her eyes, which soon changed to an expression of alarm as she glanced quickly round her to make sure that they were unobserved. "Kowar," she cried, as she took his hand in both hers, and looked lovingly into his face, "how happy I am to see you, and how often I have thought of you. And have you been well? And oh! Kowar, how have you saved yourself from the wrath of the goddess?"

"Pah!" said Kowar. "Do not let them stuff your head with silly stories, all made up to get you to let them butcher you in quietness. Come away with me, Beena, and let the people of Taricotta sacrifice some of themselves if the goddess needs blood—cruel devil that she is!"

"Hush, hush!" cried Beena, putting up her hands before his mouth. "Such talk is sinful, and sure to draw down anger upon us. And, Kowar, you do wrong to come here, for the men of the village are enraged at you, and if they knew you were within the valley, they would surround and slay you. Oh! go away while you still may with safety."

"Dogs! what care I for them?" said the young hunter, scornfully. "Let one of them come within shot of me if he values his life. But you are glad to see me, Beena?" he continued, as he leaned his gun against a tree, and put his disengaged arm around the girl. "It was for you only that I ran away. I did not care for death, for I face it every day in the forest when I can get a chance of meeting a tiger. But I saw that you were crying, and I thought that if you cared enough for me to make you weep, life was still worth living for, and so—I ran away."

"And oh, Kowar! I was so glad that you escaped," said the Meriah, as her tears began to flow. "When I saw you distance your pursuers and disappear in the jungle, I felt as if Tari had taken me to herself and filled me full of the bliss that belongs to the gods. But, Kowar, I fear for you. The anger of the goddess will seek you out, and her servants are the snake and the tiger. Promise me that you will take care of yourself now; and, Kowar, after—when I become a goddess, I shall always watch over you and guide your steps away from danger."

"You are dearer to me as you are," said Kowar, fondly stroking the

girl's soft ringlets. "And I can protect myself as long as I can raise this rifle to my shoulder. See, Beena, how fine a gun I have got! I slew two tigers with poisoned arrows, and took their heads and skins to the Magistrate Sahib at Berhampore, and got as much money for them as bought this good rifle. And I told him of my escape, and he was glad of it, and gave me a present of powder and shot, and bade me tell him if the people of Taricotta sought to molest me, and he would send soldiers up the pass to punish them. And he will protect you also, Beena; and you will come away with me, and never go back to the village to be made a Meriah of."

"Alas!" said the girl, shaking her head, with a sad smile, "it cannot be. The goddess is powerful, and neither Sahibs nor their guns could shield us from her wrath if she raised her right arm against us. And think, Kowar, what might befall you if you perished from her anger. How would your soul show itself to Dinga Pennu, judge of the dead, as all torn and bleeding from scrambling up the hard sides of the Rock of Leaping, it presents itself to him for condemnation, and then be sent back again to the world to be born blind or deformed, to be beaten and abused by stronger men, and to starve upon the scraps which others leave. Oh! Kowar, if you only had faith in the goddess, how happy we might have been together away from this bad world."

"And we shall be happy yet," said Kowar, striving to assume a cheerfulness that he did not altogether feel. "You will come with me, Beena, to my hut in the hills of Boad, far away from any one that would harm you. I have built it for you, and I have planted your favourite flowers round the door of it; and I have kept my finest skins to be a couch for you. Come away, Beena, and come at once, and let us get beyond the Taricotta valley before the people miss you."

Poor Beena! the temptation was a sore one. She was young, and life with love before her was still sweet. Her head had been full of a dazzling dream of celestial bliss, but here was tangible earthly happiness now put in her choice. As she weighed the two, she thought that the latter was not so despicable as she had taught herself to believe. But then the wrath of Tari? Well, Kowar did not seem to have fared any worse from having braved the goddess. But then she must not think of herself. Was it not for the people of Taricotta that she was going to give her life, that they might be made happy, and the valley grow beautiful from her blood? And if she ran away, would not the vengeance of the goddess overtake them also? She might have risked Tari's wrath for Kowar's sake, if she herself could have borne the whole brunt of it. But she could not endure the thought that people should say when a bullock died, "This has come upon us because of Beena," or when crops failed, "We must now starve on account of her ingratitude whose mouth we have so often filled."

"No, Kowar," she said, in a sad but firm voice, "it cannot be. The wrath of the goddess shall never be drawn down upon Taricotta on my

account. The people shall never scorn me, or load my name with reproach."

"As they do mine, I suppose," said Kowar, bitterly; "but what care I! Let them keep outside the range of my rifle if they are wise. But I tell you, Beena, you shall go with me when next I come back; for if you do not, I swear by Boora Pennu, the Sun-god, that I shall gather a band of the hunters of Boad, and carry you off, whether you are willing or not;" and hearing the voice of some woodmen in the adjoining thicket, Kowar kissed the girl, and disappeared in the jungle. Many more such meetings soon followed, but Beena carefully concealed them from the knowledge of the villagers, and even of the Abbaya. In vain, however, did Kowar plead his suit, and beg the girl to fly with him. A fanatic spirit of self-sacrifice had taken hold of the Meriah's mind; and she determined to steel herself against the pleadings of her own heart, and to deaden her ears to all the solicitations that Kowar could pour into them.

#### IV.

On the morning after the storm the whole village of Taricotta turned out at early dawn, before the sun had as yet appeared above the hill tops, and while the thin blue mists were still hanging like a transparent veil upon the higher portions of the landscape. It was a sorry sight that greeted their eyes as they sought for the rich rice crop which at that time yesterday had stood yellowing before them, so tall and thick and bending its heavy ears. Long ruts, waist-deep in parts, and broad enough to hold a bullock-cart, had been ploughed through the centre of the fields. In some places both grain and earth had been entirely washed away, leaving nothing but the bare scalp of subsoil. In others great piles of sand, shingle, and boulder had been piled up, among which a few stalks of rice might be seen feebly trying to raise their heads. Where the mould had been deepest and finest, the havoc had of course been greatest; and here and there were little patches of grain left unharmed, looking tauntingly luxurious, as if they had been spared for samples, to enable the husbandmen to realise what they had lost. Not only was their rice ruined for the present year, but they could see at a glance that their meadow land, denuded of its black loam, and covered as it was with shingle and sand, would never again bear those crops which had enabled Taricotta to brag over all the villages in the hills. And there was the river which had done all this damage, sunk now to its usual insignificance, and with hardly water enough in its pools to swim a duck, looking as it rolled languidly down the valley thoroughly exhausted with its mischievous efforts of the previous evening. It was hard to believe that so small a river could have done so much damage, unless the anger of the goddess had given force to its waters.

So at least it seemed to the villagers, as they looked ruefully at their ruined fields, and their hearts rose in bitterness when they thought how

their loss might have been prevented if they had obeyed the orders of Tari. At any spot where the destruction had been particularly marked, they gathered in little groups, and talked in low tones over their calamities and the cause of them.

"When a man thrusts his finger in the fire it is useless to repine at being burnt," said Beer to a knot of villagers who were standing looking gloomily down into the depths of a gully half-full of water, where Nenko's rice-field had been yesterday; "what folly to wilfully disobey the goddess, and then to hope for aught but punishment from her. We have taken the world into our own hands, and this is the way we manage it! I wonder what punishment is next in store for our disobedience? The plague for our cattle and pestilence for our children?"

"The big cotton-tree in the Meriah Grove was struck last night," said Mahang, the blacksmith, in a low voice. "The lightning has shivered the trunk half-way down, and one of the heaviest boughs lies on the ground, lopped off as clean as I could do it with my axe."

"Oh, ay," said Nenko, bitterly, while a shiver ran through the bystanders at this portent, "that tells us nothing new. We have no need to ask the priest wherefore this misfortune comes upon us. The dullest head in the village knows that Tari is furious with us for being denied blood."

"That is true," said Nenko; "we are at no loss to know what is the cause of all this trouble. But that is not the question. What we have to think of is, how we are to forestall further judgments. And here comes the man who can best tell us."

As he spoke, the Abbaya came along the fields, with a few of the village elders accompanying him. At every few paces he had to pause while some villager pointed out the ruin that had overtaken his holding, or a pitiful tale of woe and complaints were dinned into his ears. The old man was fully alive to the black looks that greeted him, and he could easily understand that the villagers regarded their misfortunes as a punishment for their having withheld Beena from the goddess, and that they were wroth with him for the hindrances which he had placed in the way of the sacrifice. And worst of all, the Abbaya himself felt that he had done wrong, and his temper was cross in proportion as his sense of guilt was strong; but his love for Beena was none the less, or his desire to save her from her doom diminished.

"Ah! my children, this is a sad disaster," said the Abbaya, as he came up to Nenko's land; "the Rain-god is but a rough ploughman when he yokes to furrow our fields. We must build a *bund* (embankment) at that sharp corner of the river, and then we shall never be so likely to have another mischance of the same kind."

"Though you build a *bund* as high as the hills of Boad, it would do no good," said Nenko, sullenly; "do you think that stone and lime will dam back the wrath of Tari?"

"Well, well," said the Abbaya, not choosing to notice the insinuation.

contained in Nenko's remark, "there are villages in the hills worse able to bear a flood than Taricotta. We have plenty of goods in the village treasury, and we can send the Panwa down to the plains to fetch up a long string of *brinjarries* (carriers) laden with rice."

"And suppose Tari lets loose her tigers upon them in the pass?"—"And what shall we do when another and a worse flood comes upon us?"—"When the plague takes our cattle, and the pestilence carries off our children!"—"What is our head man good for?"—"Is it to stand between us and the goddess, with his back turned away from Tari?"—"He wants to keep back the girl from the goddess!"—"That she may run away, like Kowar!"—were the angry exclamations that replied to the Abbaya's proposal.

"My friends," said the old man with dignity, "I have been thirty years Abbaya of Taricotta, and no one has ever reproached me with having aught in my eye but the interests of the village. If you have anything to say, say it, but respect my office, for in slighting it ye slight yourselves."

Then Beer stood forward as the spokesman of the rest, and told the Abbaya how they all knew that the village had fallen under the anger of the goddess because of blood kept back, that it was now two years since Kowar had fled from the sacrifice, and though a Meriah yet remained among them, no steps had been taken to appease the goddess. All these misfortunes had come upon them because of Tari's anger, and the blood of the village, its wives and its children, would lie on the heads of those who stood between her and the sacrifice.

"And who stands between her and the sacrifice?" asked the Abbaya tartly, "who but the English Sahibs that have forbidden us to have more Meriahs. It does not seem much of a gain to make peace with Tari at the price of war with them."

"The people of Taricotta never yet feared to go to the war-field," said Beer with a slight sneer; "if we can get the goddess on our side, I for one will gladly go down the pass to fight them—stay at home who will."

As Beer had probably calculated, the Abbaya lost his temper at this reflection upon his courage. "Have your own way," said the old man angrily; "you know well I never failed when there was fighting to be done, and I shall meet the English Sahibs as willingly as ever I stood up against the men of Tintilkote or of Bhoomghur. Only should your houses be given to the flames, and yourselves carried off to prison in the plains, after my head has been laid on the ground, you will know whom you have to blame."

That night a meeting of the village council was held under the great cotton-tree before the Abbaya's door, and it was unanimously resolved that Beena, the Meriah, should be at once sacrificed to save Taricotta from the further vengeance of the incensed goddess; and the priest was ordered to fix the earliest propitious day for the rite. The Abbaya pre-



sided at the meeting as his duty required him, but he took no part in the discussion, and simply announced the resolution at which they had arrived, and promised that it should be given effect to. The elders then went quietly home to the village, and soon the women and children of Taricotta were sorrowing over the news that the hour of Beena, the Meriah, had come.

## V.

All was still in Taricotta. Even the dogs had gone to sleep and to forget their hunger in dreams that a great day of killing pigs was at hand. Scarcely a jackal disturbed the quiet with his child-like cry. There was no sound in the valley, but the impatient murmur of the streams as they leaped down the hill-sides, or the low moaning of the big trees far up on the ridge, except that now and then the cry of a hungry tiger, jarring horribly on the silence of night, rose up far away down the pass. The people of Taricotta were early bed-goers, and also too staunch believers in the malevolence of devils to stay out of doors after nightfall.

Beena was lying awake looking through the narrow slit in the wall, barred by wooden staunchions, which served for a window in the Abbaya's house. There was a great red star resting on the summit of the War-god's hill, and casting a dusky ray into the chamber; and Beena, as she lay looking up to the light, was turning over many things in her mind. She had an instinctive feeling that her time was not far distant, and she tried bravely to sever from her heart all earthly longings, and to fix her thoughts upon the bliss and splendour of the celestial career on which she was destined to enter. She knew that the flood had been sent upon the village because of the wrath of Tari, and she divined that the villagers would take the readiest way of appeasing the goddess by a Meriah sacrifice. She noticed also that the Abbaya had blessed her that evening with more than his usual affection, and that his voice had trembled when he dismissed her to rest. What else could this mean than that the time for the sacrifice was at hand? The old man's grief, and Kowar's too, would, Beena tried to think, be the only drawbacks to the happiness which she wished to feel at going to Tari, and becoming a goddess. How weak and insignificant was she just now compared with what she would soon be! All that she was good for here was to help the village wives to nurse their babies, to tend sick people, to cry with those that were in trouble, and to gather berries and flowers for the children that were not able to go out into the woods. But how different would be her position when she became a goddess! She would then rest on the light clouds that hung over the valley and fling them for a shade between it and the sun at the hot noon-day. She would make the evening airs cool and pleasant, and cause springs of water to open up near the village with borders of green grass and wild flowers growing round them. She would watch over the crops, and turn away the blighting dry winds from them in the hot months when the grass is crackling and the heavy ears of grain bend

faintly towards the earth. She would sow the forest with flowers, and guide the children's feet far away from the nests of snakes when they went into the woods to play. And Kowar—he was rash and over-bold, and she must always hover about his path and keep him from harm! She would like to get a great red star, just like that which was shining into the room, and carry it like a lantern to lighten his way when he was belated in the forest. But should Kowar take home a wife to his hut in the hills of Boad—and Beena thought not without some bitterness that such an event was not impossible—after she had gone to Tari, then Kowar would not want her to look after him—no, no, that would be his wife's duty! And while these thoughts were passing through her mind, the star-light was interrupted, and a face put close to the window said, in a low whisper, "Hist, Beena, hist!"

"Kowar!" said the girl in the same tone, and rose, and casting her garments round her, went softly out of the door.

Kowar was standing by the side of the house in the dim starlight, with his rifle poised upon his arm in case of attack. He had put aside his leopard-skin cloak lest he might have to trust to his speed to save himself; and he now stepped forward and took Beena's hand as the girl came cautiously out.

"Oh, Kowar," she whispered, "why did you venture to come here? If any one should see you the village would be roused, and you would be taken and slaughtered."

"Not while I can raise this rifle to my shoulder," said Kowar proudly. "It will be the life of any man in Taricotta to lay hand on me. But, Beena, you are in danger. Bullal, the hunter, who passed through Taricotta last evening, heard that a day had been fixed for the sacrifice, and that to-morrow your locks will be shorn. Lose no time; if there is anything you wish to take with you, seize it and let us make for the hills of Boad, for we must get outside the Taricotta valley before to-morrow at daybreak.

"Nay, but, Kowar," said Beena, endeavouring to be firm, although she felt much inclined to cry, "I belong to the goddess, and may not desert her service. Shall I turn my back upon the people of Taricotta, and leave those to the anger of Tari who have been my fathers and have fed me since I was a child?"

"Yes, as they feed a lamb for the butchering knife," said Kowar angrily; "but you owe no debt to them, Beena, for it was not by your own free will that you came to the village. So come, let us take to the forest. All the hunters in the hills of Boad now call me their captain, and I could soon raise as many men as would make the people of Taricotta stand their distance."

"But not Tari, Kowar; not Tari," said Beena sadly. "Of what avail would all your strength be against the wrath of the goddess. The snake and the tiger are her servants, and she holds the floods and the lightnings in her hands. What would it profit us to purchase a short-lived

happiness by displeasing her, and with the certainty before us that her vengeance would speedily follow with tenfold force? We cannot thwart the gods, but they will more than requite us for our disobedience."

"All folly," said Kowar, impatiently. "Look at me. Don't you think that if Tari could, she would harm me because I ran away from her? And what has she been able to do to me? Have I not been the luckiest hunter on all the hills, from Kimedya to Boad? Do not all the other *shikarries* (hunters) give place to me, although I have barely been two years among them? Have I not found favour among the English Sahibs, and got presents from them? Does that look like punishment?"

"It may come yet, Kowar," said Beena, with a sigh; "but it shall not, if I can prevent it. When I am a goddess, I shall intercede with Tari for you, and I shall always watch over you, and keep you from harm. When you see the blue clouds curling over the valley you will think that I am looking down at you; and you will remember me when the stars come out at night, and say to yourself that Beena is guiding their light down to shine upon you, will you not, Kowar?"

"Beena," said the young man, "do not let them deceive you with idle stories which are only meant to make you submit quietly to be murdered. The English Sahibs and the people in the plains know better than us, poor jungly beasts, and they say that the worship of Tari is all lies, and the fine tales which are told to the Meriahs about becoming gods and goddesses utter falsehoods."

"Kowar," said the girl, with ashy face and trembling lips, "if you love me, do not say such things. Think what a trial I have to go through, and do not destroy the only hope that can give me strength to undergo it."

"Tush," said Kowar; "you will come away with me from this quickly. Get a *chaddar* (cloak) to wrap round you, and let us be off this instant. If the Abbaya were roused, it might be death to both of us, for I would not like to point my rifle at the old man. Come, then."

"Never, Kowar; it cannot be," said Beena, in a low and sad, but firm tone, as she shrank back from the grasp which he laid on her arm. "I shall not betray the village. I love the people well; and how can I show my love better than by giving my blood for them that they may thrive. I am Tari's Meriah."

"You silly little fool," said Kowar, losing his temper; "if you only knew as well as I do what it is to be tied to the stake, with the cruel, glittering axe flashing before your eyes, you would not want two tellings to take this chance of escape. But come, if you will not go of yourself, I must carry you; and remember, if you scream you will sacrifice my life as well as your own;" and he seized Beena by the waist, and was about to toss her up on his broad shoulders, when a deep voice behind him called out, "Hold!" Kowar quitted his grasp of the girl, and raised his rifle as he stood face to face with the Abbaya.

"Put down your gun," said the old man in a low tone. "I fear it

not; but I mean you no harm, Kowar. Stand aside, and speak with me a few words."

"Am I free to go, Abbaya?" said Kowar, respectfully. "I tell you I will not be taken without fighting by any man in Taricotta."

"You are free to go," said the Abbaya. "I swear it by the skin of the tiger, and may the brute devour me if I speak falsely."

Kowar followed the old man apart until they stood under the shade of the great cotton-tree, beneath which the village councils were held.

"They tell me, Kowar," said the old man, speaking in a whisper, as if he feared lest the very leaves overhead might learn his secret—"they tell me that you have found much favour with the English Sahibs, and that the great lords in the plains listen to your words about what is going on in the hills. Now, Kowar, the Sahibs are anxious to stop the Meriahs, and if they knew that Beena was to be sacrificed at sunset on the fourth day from this, they would very likely send soldiers to put a stop to the rite. And, Kowar, you are a well-wisher to the village which gave you food for so many years, and you would surely never give information to the Sahibs about this. They would be sure to come and stop it, if they knew. That is what I wished to say to you, Kowar; and now go, and the gods keep your path. You understand me, do you not?" and through the darkness the old man shot a look full of cunning meaning into the youth's face, as he left Kowar standing beneath the cotton-tree.

The hunter remained for a moment looking into the barrel of his rifle, in deep reflection. "By the sword of Loha Pennu, god of war, the old man wants her rescued; and rescued she shall be. I shall go straight down the pass to Macpherson Sahib, and get a party of *Paiks* (militia) to stop the sacrifice, and take away Beena. And now for a march down to the hot plains."

"I have not betrayed the village," said the Abbaya to himself, as he went back to his couch; "no, I have not betrayed the village. How could I have seized a strong young man armed with a gun? And I distinctly told him *not* to tell the English Sahibs that there was to be a Meriah sacrifice. No; no one can say that I have betrayed the village," and applying this consideration with somewhat doubtful success, to the relief of his conscience, the Abbaya soon composed himself to sleep.

## VI.

On the evening of the fourth day, when the sun was sinking down towards the hills, a procession was formed at the door of the Abbaya's house, and with it came every man, woman, and child that was able to travel in Taricotta, all dressed in their gayest holiday attire, their heads and necks garlanded with flowers, and most of the men considerably excited by deep draughts of the *Mhowa* liquor.

All the solemn preliminaries of a Meriah sacrifice had been duly observed. The villagers went out in solemn procession, in newly-washed

clothes and with perfumed hair, to the Meriah Grove, and had publicly vowed human flesh to Tari. The priest had gone to the Abbaya's house, attended by the village elders, and had caused the Panwa to shear Beena's silken locks. The maiden was then clothed in white, and a crown of rare wild-flowers put upon her head, while all the people in the village pressed into the room to worship her, and to present her with sweetmeats and flowers. Beena received them with calm resignation. The terrible position in which she was now placed was one for which she had been educated all her life, and she now fell naturally into it. What perhaps disquieted her most was that, instead of the warm, loving welcome with which the women and children of the village used to greet her, they now came forward and presented their offerings with reverential and awe-struck looks, making her feel as if she were already severed from the rest of humanity. She tried hard to fix her mind upon the glory which awaited her, and which was now so near her reach, and to keep out of her thoughts the terrible ordeal by which it must be attained. Sometimes the wicked words which Kowar had said would flash across her mind, but she firmly dismissed them as impious, and prayed that Tari would strengthen the faith of her handmaiden. Now and then thoughts of Kowar's hut among the hills of Boad would come into her head; but on these she would not dwell, except to think how she would linger about the spot when she was a goddess, and make the fairest flowers and the most delicious fruit grow about its doors, and ward off all wild beasts from its neighbourhood. She held out her hands to the little girls who had been her playmates, but though they kissed her when she bade them, it was with solemn awe-struck faces, very unlike the laughing countenances which they would have shown her a day or two before; and Beena began to feel the distance in which her position had placed her from her friends, and to long wearily that it was all over.

Meanwhile the villagers outside held high festival. Many kids had been killed, and large jars of *Mhowa* liquor brewed. Beena could hear the men shouting and dancing half through the night. In truth, they had need to intoxicate themselves, for they all loved Beena so much that but for the excitement of drinking and of their wild dances, they could not have had nerve to persevere in their cruel purpose. Only the Abbaya stalked gloomily about the village, taking no part in the festivities, and going to bed a good hour earlier than his ordinary time.

Now all was ready, and Beena the Meriah was brought out and placed in a chair, wreathed with flowers, and ornamented with gaudy tinsel. The Abbaya, carrying his spear and shield, headed the procession side by side with the priest, the Panwa piping shrilly before them. Four sturdy shoulders raised the Meriah's throne; and the Abbaya led the way up the slope in the direction of the isolated Grove, where as long as they could remember, the villagers had been wont to sacrifice to the goddess. Beena's face was deadly pale, but her eyes which were turned towards

the sky were lit up with an enthusiasm which no earthly terrors could quench. Now and then she mechanically joined in snatches of the hymn in praise of Tari, which the villagers sang as they marched along, and her voice rang out in clear, full and sweet measures like the pipe of a mountain thrush. The women all came behind her weeping secretly, for it would have been accounted of evil omen, if the oblation of the day had been marred by any outward signs of grief. The men also felt nervous, and oppressed with a vague dread, quite different from the wild enthusiasm with which they were usually wont to celebrate the sacrifice.

The Grove was reached. The Abbaya stuck his spear into the ground, and cast a doubtful glance about him. The chair was lowered, and Beena, with folded hands and eyes firmly fixed upon the skies, walked forward and placed her back against a great white stake, that had been erected in the centre of the Grove. The priest and the Panwa speedily bound the girl to it, for the Abbaya, who ought to have taken the chief part in the ceremonial, did nothing but look moodily on. The villagers gathered round in a semicircle, leaving the priest standing before the victim, and the long ritual of prayers and interrogatories that form the prelude to the sacrifice commenced.

On a small spot of green sward high up on the brow of the hill, and screened by a tall fern-crested rock from the hot rays of the declining sun, Kowar was lying at full length in the grass. He had travelled that day from his home in the distant ranges of Boad, and he was now resting himself while he ate his frugal dinner of dried flesh and rice-cakes. Besides his rifle, Kowar had stuck a light axe, such as the Khonds use for hand-to-hand fighting, into his belt, and the leopard skin was folded so as to serve for a shield to his breast and left arm.

"It is nearly the time," he said to himself, as he turned on his elbow, and looked up to the sun. "The *Naik* (corporal) and his men must have nearly reached the top of the pass by this time, and will be waiting for me to guide them to the Meriah Grove. These bloodthirsty brutes will get a surprise when we burst in among them. I hope they will show some fight, for there are one or two of them whose skins I would not be sorry to drub."

He rose and taking his rifle in his hand, scrambled a few feet up the face of the rock, and looked down over the tree tops into the valley below.

"I see them gathering at the Abbaya's house," he muttered, shading his eyes with his hands. "There goes Nenko, and there Mahang the blacksmith, and there are crowds of the women. I must be off, and lead on the Paiks (militia)."

"Dear Beena! how happy we shall be when safe in the hills of Boad. She will be timid at first, and will be always in dread of the wrath of the goddess. All lies, utter lies! What has Tari ever been able to do to me, who blackened her face for her in Taricotta? That for her!" and in the exuberance of his spirits, Kowar pointed his piece at



the sky, and made a motion with his finger as if he had pulled the trigger.

He walked briskly down the forest footpath leading in the direction of the top of the pass, where was a party of Paiks and policemen, which the English Commissioner, Captain Macpherson, had readily sent to assist him in rescuing the Meriah. His heart was so light that it was with difficulty he could keep from dancing, and he tossed his rifle carelessly about in the air, regardless of the danger of its going off. With eyes uplifted to watch the fall of the rifle, and hands outstretched to deftly catch it by the stock and the barrel, he did not notice that a drowsy snake was basking in the afternoon sunshine on the open path until he had put his naked foot upon a cold fold of its body. With a bound Kowar sprang back, but not faster than the angry reptile had raised its hood, curved back its body and with a hiss of rage planted its poison fangs deep in the fleshy part of Kowar's leg; and then quick as thought, drew back and raised itself on the defensive, with outspread hood and neck swelling and trembling with fury. In another instant Kowar had fired, and the snake after one or two convulsive wriggles lay dead, a headless mass before him on the path.

Then Kowar drew a long breath, and looked first at the snake and then down at his wounded limb. "A cobra, by all the gods!" he cried with a groan of agony, "and I am but a dead man. This must be the vengeance of Tari come upon me at last. But she-devil that she is, I care not for her, and though I have not many hours to live I shall baulk her of another victim. Keep up heart, Kowar, and die like a man with your defiance in the foul face of the Delighter-in-blood."

He tied a piece of string round his leg immediately above the wound, which was already beginning to swell, and taking the point of his hunting knife, he cut out a bit of flesh round about the puncture made by the poison fangs, and let the blood flow freely down. He then re-loaded his rifle, and set out with weak and uncertain steps down the forest.

"If I could only reach the party," he thought, "and tell them how to make their way to the Meriah Grove. But I feel that cursed poison working in me, and my legs will hardly carry me much farther. The brutes!—the cruel, hard-hearted brutes!—will murder her; and I so near, and yet unable to raise a hand to save her."

He struggled on with set teeth and shaking limbs, sweating at every pore, and reeling from side to side of the path like a drunken man. At last he leaned heavily against a tree, and tore off some of the bark with his teeth to cool his burning palate.

"Oh, gods!" he groaned, "I can go no farther. Yes, Tari, you have conquered, but take my dying curse and defiance. I feel the cold stiffness creeping over me. Water! water! Oh for a draught of water!" And he sank down helpless and shivering at the foot of the tree, and lay in a heap which would have seemed lifeless but for the spasmodic sighs in which he drew his breath.

It was only for a few minutes that Kowar lay there.

"The axe! the axe!" he cried, starting up suddenly. "I see the axe! Hold, I will save her! I say you shall not slay her!" And, springing to his feet with the strength of frenzied delirium, he dashed down through the jungle, heedless of all obstacles, in the direction of the Meriah Grove, and again fell trembling and breathless on the bare summit of a cliff, from which he could see the place of sacrifice, and the bloody tragedy that was being enacted in it, three or four hundred yards below him.

As he lay there he collected his senses with a desperate effort, and took in the scene that was before him. The Janni had finished his litany, and, with the axe in his hand, now stood by ready to strike at the white figure which, bound closely to the stake, seemed as motionless as if already dead. Straining his eyes, Kowar could mark that the Abbaya appeared to interfere, but several of the village elders took him by the arm and forcibly pulled him back.

"And now," said Kowar, "one last shot at that demon with the axe, and then I shall lie down and die. My hand shakes and my sight is dim, but I am sure I can strike him. Beena, dear Beena," he cried feebly, raising himself on one knee, "this is all that I can do for you—yes, all—all!"

He fired, and the bullet struck, not the priest, but the Abbaya who had sprung forward to arrest the blow that the Janni had raised his arm to strike, and who now fell dead, shot through the heart, over the bloody corpse of the victim at the stake, while a loud cry of sorrow rose up from the valley to the ear of Kowar.

"Beena!" he whispered; "Beena! I am coming—wait for me!" and he fell back dead, his smoking rifle still clutched firmly in his hands.

This was the last Meriah that was sacrificed at Taricotta, or in any village of those highlands. When the Paiks, impatient of Kowar's delay, made their way to the Meriah Grove, they found that blood had been already shed, and the people were standing by looking stupidly at the bodies of Beena and the Abbaya, and not knowing what to do next. The flesh of the Meriah ought, according to the rite, to have been parted among the householders of Taricotta, each of whom would have buried his portion in his own field, to ensure the blessing of the goddess upon his crops. But this the Paiks would not allow, and the bodies of both Beena and the Abbaya were buried in one grave. The priest and the Panwa, with Beer and Nenko and Mahang the blacksmith, were carried off to the plains, and punished with fines and imprisonment by the English magistrates, according to the degree in which each had been implicated in the murder of the Meriah. And soon after the English stretched out a firm hand over the hills, so that no one dared henceforth to gratify the taste of Tari for human blood.

## Giacomo Leopardi.

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It is seldom that evil circumstances so combine as to surround with clouds and darkness on every side a blameless new adventurer upon human life. Poverty, lowliness, subjection, even pain, are often convertible by some attendant privilege or force bestowed upon the sufferer into aids rather than hindrances towards excellence and the higher aims of being—aids harsh and severe indeed, but helping forward a great purpose, and strengthening all the loftier powers of resolution, patience, and constancy. Yet there are cases in which everything is against the beginner in life—where we are called upon to watch a struggle which is desperate almost from its first moment, the utmost heroism of effort being insufficient to thread through those accumulating glooms, which at last swallow up the wavering glimmer of light and hope. Such a case was that of Giacomo Leopardi. His earlier life was a contradiction in terms. Noble, yet poor; full of energy and fervour but physically feeble and suffering; loving liberty as life, yet born an Italian when Italy was nothing but a geographical expression; a passionate lover, but incapable of inspiring love; a man all soul, yet destitute even of that belief in immortality which might have given him the support of a posthumous hope; capable of everything, yet of nothing; the greatest scholar, almost the greatest genius of his time, yet without any means of exercising nobly either his learning or his power. It is not possible to conceive a greater combination of evils. A strong man might have struggled through this *selva oscura* of disabilities and dangers; a Christian might have been stimulated by divine hope to penetrate its darkness; an obstinate and unsusceptible mind might have borne the renderings of the passage; but Leopardi was neither strong, nor dull, nor Christian. No heavenly recompense smiled upon him, no serenity of frame or mind made him capable of the struggle. With bleeding footsteps, with wrung heart, with despairing soul, he worked his painful way up to the crown of life, that *mezzo di cammin* which is so often the starting point of noblest effort; and there sank, all strength, all consolation, all power of continuance gone out of him. Perhaps it is the painfulness of the contemplation of such a life of suffering which has made his very name so little known, Fame even having refused her last and poorest of compensations to the melancholy poet; but this only gives his sad figure a more interesting position in that dimness of recent history which is more confusing than the distant past. At the very moment when the last great wave of poetical influence was at its high

tide in England : when all our last flight of poets were still in song, and the world fully roused to know that such high fortune as befalls few generations had fallen to the lot of the newborn nineteenth century : this man, a genius as fine as any of them—as melodious as Shelley, as serious as Wordsworth, as fiery as Byron—had begun to pour forth his strains into that deadened, half-stupefied ear of Italy, which has heard the highest music in its time, but for years had heard nothing but effeminate ditties of decay. And here and there, with those songs of his, no doubt Leopardi stirred the slumbering life, and brought back a start of higher emotion, a stretching of the paralysed limbs, a tremor of the dulled heart. How much indeed of the new life of Italy is due to him, and to such as him, workmen never rewarded, scarcely appreciated, doing their highest work for nothing, as all great labourers do, will never be known. If he lived to see the dead bones stirring, that was all ; and he had not enough hope in him to believe in anything except failure and despair.

It is difficult for the English mind to realise the state of Italy at this period. The country was dead and bound in her grave with shroud and cere-cloth. Even the general consciousness of her misery had gone out of her. The young men—whom it was vain to train for any higher uses, for whom no lofty occupation, no public service was possible, unless indeed under the standards of the enemy who trod down and oppressed their country, but was willing enough to take their services and their lives, and make them food for powder—grew up idle, frivolous, and debased, as it was natural to imagine they must do : no work, no opening for fame or fortune, no means of increase or advance, nothing better than what had been, nothing greater, no escape out of their hopelessness, lay before them. Vegetating in the gaunt grandeur of those old palazzi in the grassgrown streets, lounging in the caffès, spending their time in such pitiful dissipation as their poverty afforded, in scandal, and gossip, and idleness, the very race shrank into degradation. Conspiracy was the highest occupation possible—a pursuit which made falsehood a virtue, which ennobled the petty trickery to which the race, as we all supposed, was addicted, and made the mask of effeminacy necessary as a cover for patriotic lies and murder. What an atmosphere for a young spirit to be born into—an atmosphere heavy with all the miasmas of moral decay, stagnant, breathing only intrigue, deception, unwholesome quiet, miserable exercise, dilettantism, vice !

This was what surrounded young Leopardi when he came to know what the world was that lay about him. And yet it was not this that lay about him nearest, waiting the opening of his fervid Italian eyes. What he saw first was the sweetness of the loveliest country that God has blessed and man has cursed since the world began : the sun rising every morning with a new surprise of delight, the dew falling in tenderest benediction of nature every night, the soft mountains swelling upwards into a heaven of genial air, the blue skies bending over all with smiles, and clouds, and resplendent infinity of brightness. How sweet a world ! Yet not

sweeter than the upspringing life in the boy's breast who knew no better, whom no trust or hope had yet failed, to whom the homely patriarchal life, the magical mornings and evenings, the young voice of the girl in the loggia singing at her work, the trees rustling in the soft wind, were but the earliest delightful conditions of an existence unconscious of evil, the bud of possibilities without limit, an infinitude of beauty and of hope. Imagination could not furnish more glowing pictures of this youthful confidence and the sweetness of the early days, than those which out of his despair Leopardi loves to dwell upon, in a self-torture which yet no doubt had in it some poignant fragrance of the past, rending yet consoling his heart. Here is how, over and over again, he describes that beginning of his days :—

Silvia, is all remembrance gone  
Of that hour in thy mortal days  
When beauty's early blaze,  
In thine eyes laughing, flying, shone,  
And gay, yet pensive, to the bound  
Of youth thy steps had gone ?

The quiet rooms among,  
And all the pleasant ways,  
Rang forth the sweet perpetual song  
Which, seated at thy work, intent  
Thou pouredst forth, content,  
With the vague future in thy mind.  
Sweet was the odorous May,  
And thus thy life passed day by day.  
I, careless, left behind  
My studies and the weary books  
On which my early time and mind  
I spent ; and there, with idle looks,  
Upon the balcony would lean  
To hear the singing of thy song,  
And watch thy rapid hand along  
The weary linen gleam,  
And gaze upon the heavens serene,  
Orchards, and every golden way,  
While here the sea, and there the hills, were seen.

No mortal tongue could say  
What in my heart arose, what sweetest thought,  
What hope, what gladness wrought,  
By sight and sound, oh Silvia mine !  
And in what gentle state,  
Shone forth both life and fate.

Here is once more the same picture—a picture of youthful contemplation, of that passive moment so sweet and full of hope which forms the preface to life, but was better than anything in life to Leopardi, and upon which he is never tired of dwelling. It is from the poem called *Ricordanze* :—

Fair stars of Urša ! I ne'er thought to turn,  
As in old times, to contemplate your light

O'er the home-garden glimmering, and once more  
 Watch you and talk with you, from windows where  
 A child I gazed upon you, in the house  
 Where all my joys came to so sudden close!  
 How many soft imaginations took  
 My heart, what fervid sweetness at the sight  
 Of your dear lights, and those that shone with you!  
 While silent, lonely, on the verdant sward,  
 Darkling I sat, while the soft evening passed,  
 Gazing upon the heavens, noting the croak  
 Of frogs in the still fields; and by the hedge  
 The glowworms wandering devious; while in air  
 The nets swung high and whispered in the wind;  
 The trees breathed odours, the dark cypress sighed  
 Out in the wood; and close at hand beneath  
 My father's roof, alternate sounds of voice  
 And tranquil movement: oh, what depths of thought,  
 What gentle visions breathed into my heart  
 At sight of those blue hills, that distant sea,  
 Which shone afar, and which one day should lead  
 To unknown worlds and visioned joys unknown!

\* \* \* \*

The wind brings back the striking of the hour  
 From the town belfry. How the sound consoled  
 The lingering nights when in my chamber dark  
 I lay a child, by terror kept awake,  
 And sighed for morn. Nothing I hear or see  
 But wakes familiar images, or brings  
 Some touch of sweet remembrance to my heart,  
 Sweet in itself: but adding pain to pain,  
 Bringing vain longings for the past though sad,  
 To mar the present, although sadder still,  
 With whisper of, "I was"—. This balcony  
 Turned to the last sweet shining of the day;  
 Those painted walls; the pictured flocks; the sun  
 Rising o'er silent plains: all added joy  
 To leisure, while the Error of my youth  
 Held by my side, potent, with whisperings soft  
 Where'er I went. Within these ancient walls,  
 At whitening of the snow when winter came,  
 And round the ample windows hissed the wind,  
 Gay voices echoed and delightful sounds,  
 What time the bitter, base, and pitiful  
 Mystery of all things, showed itself all bright,  
 And full of sweetness: and the ingenuous boy,  
 Like simple lover, inexpert, deceived,  
 Adorned his life with lovely dreams, and feigned  
 Beauty created by his mind alone.

Landscapes like this abound in all Leopardi's poems. It is the one scene always repeated. The great still house, with its pictured walls, the loggia overhanging the garden, where the youth watches the girl singing at her work, where he communes with the great stars that stoop



towards him out of that Italian sky : where the nets of the bird-snarers hang in the wind, *susurrandi*, whispering as they blow about among the tree-tops, and the harsh note of the frogs comes softened from the distance ; where the hills rise blue on one hand and the sea discovers itself far off by its gleaming on the other : and from the tower of the *borgo*, the town which is the central point in the landscape, the night wind brings the chiming of hour after hour prolonged after the old Italian fashion. Other minute and tender pictures dwelt upon with a fond melancholy bring out the secondary lights and shadows of the scene.

But there is an ever-recurring second, almost monotonous in its repetition, to this exquisite strain of recollection. Sweet as his first realisation of life had been, innocent, tender, bewitching, so bitter was the contradiction that interrupted that harmony as the young poet grew older, and, at the moment when his hopes ought to have been realised, saw the infinite horizon contract around him, and those fresh wonders of life lose their surprise and their possibility together, and fade into the light of common day. Death appeared in his new world to give the lie to all the fair seemings of existence, and disease and sickness followed in his own person ; and the young soul, ambitious of all noble ends, found himself bound to beggarly elements of living, to a penurious sloth, a life without meaning, without object, without scope for exertion. Out of all his gentle dreams—out of the hope that had been so sweet, the *possente errore* which veiled the world in a fine mystery, and brought the noblest examples of Roman patriotism and Greek perfection to his hand, the young man awoke, gradually or suddenly, to find himself in the hopeless and helpless Italy of fifty years ago, without occupation or aim, condemned to the dreary provincial society of the obscure *borgo* Recanati, to save cigar-ends and economize macaroni, and know nothing and be nothing, beyond the circle of the casino. He might indeed have entered the Church and found a career there, the only career then open to an Italian, but this was against all the habits and prejudices of his nature ; besides that there had happened to him a crowning loss, the climax of all his disappointments and miseries—the loss of his faith. To such a man in such circumstances it is impossible to imagine any personal misfortune so overwhelming as this. There are men to whom it seems to matter little ; but to Leopardi, so bound and fettered and hemmed in on every side, so deceived by all the illusions of beginning life, and so bitter in his consciousness of the deception, no catastrophe more terrible could have occurred. The dreary cloud of unbelief blotted out the sweet skies to him, as well as the God who had filled their vastness with meaning. There is a strange and harsh sonnet among his poems in which he records this final misfortune, which is past translating and almost past repeating, so bare, so harsh, so sternly unpoetical is it, breaking up the flowing Italian into short sharp decisive notes of despair, and full of that strange resentment against the God whose very existence it denies, which is one of the strangest features of modern

unbelief. And this is all the more apparent in Leopardi, because there seems no necessity of nature in him working towards so dismal an end; rather his atheism has an air of artificial conviction, as of a creed imposed upon him by some strain of intellectual tyranny, to which he yields with a shiver of the whole being. Never perhaps in poetry has the burden of moral despair been expressed with so much intensity of feeling. No evangelical parable of an unbeliever's gloom and suffering was ever written in blacker colours—indeed, in allegorical fiction such a sketch would be both cruel and false; but fact and reality sanction all extravagance. Angry with himself for ever having believed in happiness, yet straining to his worn bosom the recollection of that belief as the only thing worth having in life; angry with God for not existing; sore and wounded and bleeding with all the thrusts of fate, he stands and calls the earth and the skies to witness that no sorrow was ever like his sorrow. And, indeed, a picture more full of passionate anguish, more pitiful to the spectator could not be. To most men some comfort, some enjoyment in actual life has broken the monotony of pain, and if the hereafter is lost to them, they have at least had something here; but Leopardi had nothing—nothing but the hope of everything—a hope which perished like morning dew at the first touch of real life, and appears to him only as a lie, the sweetest of lies, yet the most terrible. He cannot forget it, he cannot be indifferent or forgive life for this cruellest of deceptions, but returns to the subject every time that nature beguiles him into any passing sweetness of contemplation, any perception of the beauty round him. The lovely little picture which he calls *La Quiete dopo la tempesta*, in which the reader seems to see the clearing off of the rain, the birds resuming their songs, the workman coming out to the door of his workshop to look at the brightened sky, the windows reopened in the loggia; and to hear the sound of the bells far off on the road, as the waggon resumes its journey, and the cry of the herb-seller passing from street to street; cannot be allowed to conclude without the terrible moral which constantly recurs to his mind. "Oh courteous nature," he cries, "these are the delights thou givest to man. To issue out of trouble is joy enough for us. Sorrow thou givest with a full hand, but if a little pleasure is born to us out of suffering, what a gain it seems! Oh human race, dear to the gods; happy are ye if ye are permitted to breathe without anguish, blessed when death heals ye of all trouble!" Another still more beautiful little vignette—exquisite minute picture of Italian life—describes the village Saturday evening, *Il Sabato del villaggio*. It is very different from the Saturday night we wot of in our national poetry. The whole scene breathes that junction of poetical grace with the most rustic simplicity which is so rarely accomplished and so exquisite. Leopardi describes the girl coming from the fields with her bundle of grass for the cow, with a bunch of roses to put in her hair and her bosom next day at the festa; and the old woman spinning among her neighbours on the outside stair, and maundering garrulous, of how she too decked herself once, and danced the whole evening through; while

the bell is ringing in token of to-morrow's holiday, and the children dance and play in the piazza, the very air, dim with twilight, then white with the rising of the moon, betraying a tremulous sympathy with the general expectation and hope. "This is the sweetest day of the seven," he cries, "full of hope and joy. To-morrow grief and annoyance will reclaim the hours, the accustomed work will be resumed. Foolish youth, thy age is like that day full of happiness, that day clear and serene, the day before the festa of thy life." This is the continual moral of his verse. There is one thing good in life, and that is youth, which lies, yet lies so sweetly; and beyond that there is nothing good, but death, death which heals of every evil. It is the only advantage belonging to the human race which does not disappoint the soul. *Amore e Morte* is a hymn of praise, such as mortal man has rarely composed, to this final good. Love and Death are brother and sister, born at one birth, the most beautiful of earthly things. Death is the sister lovely and sweet to see, not such as cowards feign her. We cannot hope to reach the delicate loveliness of the original; but the idea may be conveyed, though not in the same melodious words:—

When in the heart profound,  
New love first draws its breath,  
Languid and faint, is with it found  
A wish for death.  
Perhaps because the eyes take fright  
Then at this desert, and earth seems  
A waste wherein no man can dwell  
Without that new sole infinite  
Joy that has dawned upon his dreams.

\* \* \* \* \*

The clown from the neglected fields,  
Devoid of courage high,  
And strength that knowledge yields,  
The maiden, mild and shy,  
Who, at the very name of death,  
Shuddered and held their breath:  
Learn to take courage for the grave,  
Eyes full of constancy  
With funeral fillet dare to bind,  
And in their untaught hearts descry,  
How gentle 'tis to die,  
So much to death Love turns the mind.

This is the softer aspect of his deadly melancholy. And the reader will find in Leopardi's shorter poems so many lovely pictures and thoughts that the monotony of this refrain will lead him more to an unspeakable pity than to any sense of disapproval or painful perception of weakness. He is not a harper upon one string, making his mournful perpetual cry echo through the world; but a true poet, whose fancy and his heart continually cheat him out of his despair, just long enough

to permit the dream-world to gleam upon him once more, all beautiful and sweet, ere he recollects himself, and clutches again and again at his misery. Gleams of this sweetness flash upon him from all sides, notes of the tenderest melody, until ever again and again the *pensiero dominante* comes back to his mind, turning the sweet into bitter. We seem to see the escape from the gloom, the snatch of unconscious hope at things which are still delightsome and lovely—then the sharp pull back to reality, the constant re-apprehension of his despair.

This personal side of Leopardi's poetry is its most interesting aspect to ourselves; but the outbursts of national feeling, the cry of outraged patriotism, fiery and fervid as ever poet poured forth, are no less remarkable. One of these has been lately recalled to us by the powerful hand of George Eliot, whose Jewish singer in her last work, the visionary Mirah, sings the Ode to Italy, with all the added charm of music, which gives to such a lofty lyric its fullest force:—

I see thy walls and arches, oh dear land,  
Columns and standards and the armed, great  
Towers of our fathers; but the glory, no—  
I see not; nor the laurels, nor the brand  
They girt about them, noble weight.  
Now, brow and bosom naked to the foe,  
Unarmed thou stand'st; ah me, what wounds are shown!  
What pallid looks! what blood! At such a sight  
Of thee, oh loveliest! unto Heaven I cry,  
And unto earth—who is the guilty one?  
Say, who hath brought her to this evil plight?  
Weighed down her arms with chains—deepest disgrace—  
Till thus unveild, with scattered locks, that lie  
Wildly about, she sits upon the ground  
Neglected, sad, hiding her face  
Between her knees, and weeps. Oh, weep, still weep,  
My Italy! Thy cause is great  
For tears; weep for thy people bound—  
Though born the conqueror's place to keep—  
By crime and impious fate.

If living fountains were thine eyes,  
Their lamentations ne'er could reach  
The level of thy harm and scorn—  
Poor handmaid, yet a princess born!  
They who thy honour prize  
Say nought of thee in books or speech  
But this: "Once was she great, and is no more!"  
Why? Why? Is the old vigour o'er?  
Where is thy strength, thy constancy, thine arms?  
Who from thy girdle loosed the brand?  
Who hath betrayed thee? By what cruel harms,  
What evil arts? what fatal hand  
Has plucked the golden fillet from thy brow,  
And spoiled thee of thy mantle? How  
And when hast fallen, hast fallen  
So low from place so high?

Does no one fight for thee? defend thee none—  
 No son of thine? Ho, arms! bring arms! Alone  
 Fight for thee, fall for thee, will I!  
 Grant only, Heaven, my blood may swift inspire  
 And fill Italian veins with fire!

Where are thy sons? I hear a sound of war,  
 Voices and hosts, tumultuous might.  
 In foreign lands afar  
 Thy children fight.  
 Listen, oh listen, Italy! I see  
 Horses and infantry,  
 And flame and dust, and sword-gleams glittering out  
 As shine through mist the lamps,  
 What comfort is there in success or rout?  
 The youth of Italy fight in those camps—  
 For what and whom? Oh, sires—oh, sires of might!  
 For other lands Italian legions fight.  
 Wretched is he who thus must spend his life—  
 Not for his native shore,  
 Not for dear home or tender wife,  
 But gives his being o'er  
 'Gainst foes of other men, to save  
 An alien race; who may not say,  
 Dying, in shadow of the grave,—  
 Oh, native land, for thee  
 I render back the life thou gavest me!

With this generous fervour the poet's patriotic rage bursts forth against the oppressors of his country; but his complaints take a bitterer and more painful tone when he turns back to Italy herself, degraded in her own bosom, reduced to a lower depth than the mournful abandonment which he has just described—that abyss of debasement in which the captive does not weep, but laughs, and decorates her dishevelled locks with vile garlands of festivity, false even to her sorrows. Here is his melancholy picture of his own wasting youth in the stagnant stillness of his home:—

My heart ne'er dreamed that my green age should be  
 Condemned to waste away within the bounds  
 Of this poor native town, amid a race  
 Rustic and mean, to whom all unknown things,  
 Knowledge and wisdom, are but arguments  
 For jest and laughter; and who hate and fly  
 My presence—not from envy, or with thought  
 That I am more than they; but that they feel—  
 Though ne'er a sign I gave, nor word have said—  
 That in my heart I claim a higher place.  
 Here pass the years, hidden, abandoned, lost,  
 Without or love or life; bitter and stern  
 I grow amid the unfriendly multitude;  
 Pity and ruth drop from me. I become  
 A scorner of mankind; for scorn of this  
 Mean herd that dogs my steps. And thus fly past

The dear days of my youth. Oh, dearest days  
 Better than fame or laurel, and more sweet  
 Than breath and light. Oh, youth, sole flower and crown  
 Of arid life, I lose thee! without use  
 Or one delight, in this sojourn forlorn.

Sharper still is the tone of bitter contempt in which he describes the popular glorification of the nineteenth century, which, even in its earliest quarter and in oppressed Italy, the common mind had taken up in its ordinary unreflective way. Leopardi's loathing and disdain of the newspaper brags of progress, and the perfection that was coming to the human race, may be imagined. Here is how he describes himself amid the flutter of the gay season and self-felicitations of the complacent crowd. The poem is addressed to the Marchese Gino Capponi—

I am mistaken, candid Gino. Long  
 And much mistaken. Vain and miserable  
 I held this life; and yet more foolish still  
 The season thus near ending. Now I find  
 Unbearable and false is all I say  
 To this bless'd mortal race, if one may dare  
 To call man mortal. 'Twixt surprise and scorn  
 In this fair fragrant Eden where we dwell  
 The lofty beings laugh, and thus address  
 Me melancholy: "Oh, unhappy one,  
 Incapable of pleasure; awkward soul,  
 That holdest thy ill fate the common lot,  
 And mak'st the human race responsible  
 For the misfortunes that are thine alone!"  
 Thus, from within the fumes of fine cigars,  
 To sound of crackling pastry, and the cry  
 Of military orders given for drinks  
 And ices, and the clatter of the cups  
 And brandished spoons,—thus with vivacious glance  
 Shines back upon my dazzled eyes the light  
 Of daily journals. I perceive and hail  
 The public happiness, and all the joys  
 Of mortal lot!

\* \* \* \* \*

No better age of gold  
 E'er turned upon the spindles of the Fates.  
 Each newspaper, in all their divers kinds,  
 From every shore, in concord sweet, this boon  
 Offer to mankind—Universal love,  
 Railways and Steam and multiplying Trade,  
 And Print and Cholera, which shall draw close  
 Peoples and lands however far apart.  
 Nor could we wonder much if oak and pine  
 Gave milk and honey forth; or danced a waltz  
 To sound of music, so immense the power  
 Of stills and of retorts, and the machines



That rival heaven has grown ; and still more great  
 Will grow in time to come, till without bound  
 The sons of Shem and Ham and Japhet fly  
 And further fly from height to height serene.

There is no chronological arrangement of the poems ; but this may well have been written at the time when the poet was lingering and waiting at Rome, to see if perhaps his country would find something for him to do worthy of his powers. This was the moment when Leopardi passed like a pale shadow across the serene and large existence of the German Bunsen—a man who was his antipodes in everything, healthy, happy, and prosperous, the very favourite of Fortune, but taking that warm sympathetic interest in the less happy which conciliates fate and men's hearts. Leopardi came to Rome in 1822, when he was twenty-four, to endeavour to obtain some appointment which would make it possible for him to turn his wonderful wealth of knowledge to use, and employ his genius in the public service. There he received the warmest welcome from all that was best in the eternal city, and among others became known to Niebuhr, who rushed home after meeting him, exclaiming, with an unwonted burst of enthusiasm, " that he had at last found an Italian worthy of the old Italians, and the ancient Romans." Bunsen, who succeeded Niebuhr in the post of ambassador, seems to have shared this enthusiasm, and both of them threw themselves warmly into the effort to procure him what he wanted. Bunsen even, after various negotiations, wrote thus confidently of the wished-for appointment : " I have obtained a promise," he says, " of an appointment for Leopardi, to the post which he most desired, that of Secretary-General to the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna, with a special commission to employ his leisure in completing his Italian translation of Plato, and in writing a treatise upon it." But, alas ! in 1826 we find him writing that " Leopardi and I have been thoroughly deceived. After repeated promises, not only verbally, but in writing, nothing has been done for him. I have entreated him to give out that he is going to Florence ; the fear they have of the *penna di quel sublime ingegno* being employed to their detriment might induce the granting of the long-promised pension." This weary waiting, however, wore out the poet's patience and strength. The hope of a pension or sinecure to enable him to complete his translation of Plato is indeed somewhat foreign to our notions, but the state of affairs in Italy was a century behind that existing among ourselves, and the idea would not have been at all discordant with ordinary ideas in the reign of Queen Anne, before the public had superseded the patron. The reason given by Bunsen for this tedious and tantalizing delay was the desire of the Papal authorities to force Leopardi into the Church—a most futile hope ; but it is sadly characteristic of the apathy and languor of Italy at that dark moment, not only that these negotiations should have dragged on so long, but that they should have been conducted and pressed chiefly by foreigners. All the kind Germans could do finally was to offer the great

Italian a chair, in the University of Berlin—of Italian literature, Madame Bunsen says, or according to Signor Ranieri, Leopardi's most tender friend and biographer, of Greek. This, however, he had neither the health nor the courage to accept; in fact, the increasing feebleness of his frame demanded the South and sunshine more urgently even than that work which would have kept his mind in health. Whatsoever cheering influence his hopes of occupation and prosperity might have brought, was more than lost in the dreary interval of suspense, and the failure that followed. After various wanderings about Italy, now at Bologna, now at Florence, in which latter place he seems to have found the nearest approach to happiness which ever brightened his melancholy life, he finally retired to Naples, and between the soft heights of Capodimonte and *un casinuccio in su le falde del Vesuvio*, wore out the last years of his life, finding at last, at thirty-nine, at the height of his powers, the death which he had so often invoked.

To give an idea of the works of Leopardi without adding some extracts from the beautiful fragments in prose which he has left behind him, would be a mistake beyond forgiveness, though it is difficult to choose among these brief but exquisite bits of composition which we call prose, solely on M. Jourdain's broad principle, that *tout ce qui n'est point vers est prose*. The most melodious verse could not be more poetical than some portions of the Dialogues, which are at the same time tremulous with touches of a humour which would be bitter were it less beautiful, and sharp with satire, out of which the same melodious medium takes much of the sting. Here is the theme which we have already found him insisting on in verse, the melancholy fantastic strain sounding more fantastic still when put into the form of a sustained argument. It is from the *Cantico del Gallo Silvestre*, introduced quaintly as follows by a description of the remarkable fowl which wakes the world with so strange a song:—

Many Hebrew masters and writers affirm that between heaven and earth, or rather, half in our world and half in the other, lives a certain wild cock; which standing with its feet on earth touches heaven with its crest and beak. This gigantic bird, besides various other peculiarities, which may be found in the aforesaid writers, possesses the gift of reason, or else has like a parrot, I know not which, the power of speech like mankind: for there is found in an ancient parchment written in Hebrew letters, and in a language between Chaldean, Targumic, Rabbinical, Cabalistic, and Talmudic, a Cantic, entitled *Scir detarnegol bara letzafra*, which is to say, "The Morning Song of the Wild Cock," which, not without great trouble nor without consultation with more than one Hebrew Rabbin, jurisconsult and philosopher, I have at last succeeded in understanding, and in translating into the vulgar tongue. I have not, however, been able to discover if this song is repeated from time to time, or every morning, or if it was sung on one occasion only; or who heard it; or whether the aforesaid language was the language of the bird himself; or if the Cantic was thus set forth by some other hand.

It is curious but most characteristic to find that this solemn jest introduces no humorous effusion of fancy, but the same recommendation of the advantages of death which we have already met with; and the can-

ticle of this grotesque, fantastic creation is serious as its theme, deadly grave and melancholy, and full of the peculiar atmosphere of gloom which Leopardi seems to have carried with him everywhere.

Mortals awake! You are not yet free of life. The time will come when no external force, no commotion, will disturb the quiet of slumber in which you will repose with satisfaction for ever. Death is not yet granted to you. Only from time to time a semblance of death is permitted for a short space; for life could not go on if it were not frequently interrupted. Any failure of this short and failing sleep inflicts suffering, and brings on the sleep eternal. Such a thing is life, that in order to bear it, it is necessary now and then to lay it down a little, and take breath, and restore one's strength with a taste, almost a morsel, of death.

It would seem that in the very being of things the only true object is dying. As nothing can die that has not existed, therefore from nothing arise the things that are. Certainly the ultimate cause of being is not happiness, for nothing is happy. It is true that every created thing proposes this end to itself, but no one attains it; and throughout all our life we put forth our whole strength, genius, and pains, and suffer and wear ourselves out, for no other end but to reach the sole conclusion of nature—that of death.

In every respect the first hours of the day ought to be the most agreeable to the living. Few at their awaking find in their minds delightful and happy thoughts, but almost all make an effort after them; for at this moment, even without special or certain occasion, all are inclined to gladness, and disposed more than at other times to take evil patiently, so that even he who falls asleep in despair, opens his heart to hope on awaking. Many troubles, many misfortunes and labours, many causes of fear and pain, appear less at this moment than they appeared on the previous evening. Often, also, the anguish of the past day becomes an object of contempt and even of laughter, as produced by error or vain imaginations. The evening is like old age; and on the other hand, the beginning of the morning is like youth, which is most happy and confident, but the evening sad, discouraged, and inclined to despair. And like the youth of life, that which every man has day by day, is brief and fugitive, and quickly the day declines and falls into the common round.

Here is another example, beginning with the sudden and unnecessary introduction of a certain "*Amelio, filosofo solitario*," who falls into the soft and tender strain of musing which follows:—

Birds are the happiest creatures in the world, not only in gladdening those who see them, but in themselves, by feeling gladness. The other animals are generally grave and serious; many of them appear melancholy; seldom do they show anything like joy, and when they do so, the signs of it are brief and soon over. In most delightful things, such as the green fields, open and smiling landscapes, brilliant sunshine, a sweet and crystalline atmosphere, they show no sentiment of joy or satisfaction, unless in that one instance which is told of hares, that they leap and dance together when the moon shines, and especially at full moon, delighting, as Xenophon says, in its brightness. The birds, on the contrary, always show their pleasure by happy looks and flutterings, and one of their chief charms lies in the fact that they exhibit a special disposition for enjoyment, and one that is evidently sincere. Thus when anything delights or makes them happy, they sing, proportioning the length and beauty of their song to the greatness of their joy. And as they are almost always singing, it may be inferred that they are usually happy. It is remarked that when they are in love they sing better, oftener, and longer than at any other time, but still it is not love alone which moves them, but other satisfactions as well. For example, they sing better on a serene and peaceful day than on a dark and disturbed one, and are quite

silent in a storm or in any other panic that may seize them; but when that is once over, rush forth again, singing and playing with each other. In the same way, it is their habit to sing in the morning at their awaking, to which they are moved partly by the delight of a new day, partly by the sense of restoration and refreshment shared by all living things. But above all, they show delight in the pleasant verdure, in fertile valleys, in pure and shining streams, in a beautiful landscape; in which things it is notable that all which appears most delightful to us is also so to them, as may be perceived by the localities in which they are caught in the greatest numbers by nets or snares. Of the other animals, except those that are domesticated and accustomed to live with man, few or none judge as we do, selecting their habitation on account of its loveliness. And this is not to be wondered at, for their pleasure is only in that which is natural, and a great part of that which we call natural is not so, but rather artificial; that is to say, the cultivated fields, the trees and plants arranged with care, the streams kept within their channels, and directed in a certain course, have no longer the conditions nor the appearance of simple nature. . . . But many say that the voice of the birds is sweeter and more delightful, and their singing more softly modulated, in our regions than in those inhabited by wild or savage tribes, and conclude from this that birds, although free, take a certain pleasure in the civilisation of man.

The quaint minuteness of this argument, so fantastic yet so reasonable, is wonderfully characteristic, steeped as it is to the very heart in a melancholy which underlies all the incongruities of composition and eccentricities of thought. Though this melancholy musing can scarcely be called humorous, there are many gleams of curious humour in Leopardi; sometimes grotesque, as in the dialogue between Ruysch and the mummies, sometimes full of whimsical fancy. The least sad of the Dialogues, which are amongst the most striking of his works, is that between the Sun and Copernicus, and narrates the grumbling of the great orb of day when, as it were, on strike, and refusing to continue his peregrinations round a handful of mud, inhabited by *creaturini invisibili*. The reader will find in this a welcome relief from the gloom which is so universal in the other productions from which we have quoted.

The little drama begins with an alarmed remonstrance from the *Ora prima*, the first hour of the retarded Day, as to all the fearful consequences that must ensue if *vostra Eccellenza* will not condescend to come forth and shine as usual. "What is to become of mankind?" cries this anxious minister to our race. "If they do not die of the horror of the darkness, they will be frozen; and then how difficult it will be to persuade *la Terra* to take upon herself the office which the Sun has hitherto held, and to come to him, instead of merely waiting till he comes to her!" Upon this point the lazy potentate of the skies gives his opinion and advice with philosophical calm, as follows:—

*Sol.* Necessity will spur her, and make her dance and run, when it is needful. But the most certain and speedy way would be to find a poet, or a philosopher, who would persuade the Earth to move, or push her on her way by force if other means failed. For poets and philosophers have the greatest power in respect to such matters, and can do almost anything. It was the poets who, in past times (for I was young then, and gave ear to them), with their beautiful songs, persuaded me, as if it had been an amusement or an honourable exercise, to undertake this absurd business, and

run my course, like a fool, big and huge as I am, round about a grain of sand. But now that I have come to mature years, and have turned to philosophy, I begin to think of the useful more than of the beautiful; and the sentimentality of poets, when it does not sicken me, makes me laugh. Therefore, for everything that I do now, I like to have good and substantial reasons, and I find no reason at all for replacing a quiet and peaceable life by one of continued labour, which bears no fruit worth the trouble, not to speak of the thought (for there is nothing in the world that is worth two soldi); therefore I have made up my mind to leave the labour and pains to others, and for my own part to live at home quietly and free from care. This change in me has been wrought, as I tell you, with the help of advancing age, by the philosophers, people who are now beginning to advance in power, and who gain more influence every day. In order to stimulate the Earth into motion, and to make her take up this daily round instead of me, a poet would, in some ways, be better than a philosopher; for the poets, now with one folly, now with another, make people believe that earthly things are of value and weight, and that they are delightful and beautiful, and thus creating a thousand hopes, encourage men to exhaust themselves with exertion; and philosophers do just the contrary. But, on the other side, since philosophers have begun to get the upper hand, I doubt if a poet would now be listened to by the Earth any more than I myself would listen to him; or even if he had a hearing, whether his counsel would have any effect. So it is much better that we should have recourse to a philosopher; for although philosophers are seldom very active in themselves, and little disposed to stimulate others into activity, yet it may be that in an extreme case like this, they would exert themselves contrary to their wont. It is, of course, possible that the Earth may think it more expedient to let herself go to destruction than to be compelled to work so hard, and I do not say that she would judge wrongly: however, we shall see which will be successful. Therefore, this is what you must do: be off to the Earth, or send one of your companions, whom you please; and if you find a philosopher out of doors somewhere, as reasonably you ought to find, if it were only because of the novelty of so long a night, take him up upon your back and bring him here to me, and I will try to induce him to do what is necessary.

With a prompt "*Eccellenza, si sarà servita*," the obedient Hour rushes forth upon his mission, and finding, according to his master's prevision, no less a person than Copernicus, wondering upon his loggia at the persistent darkness through which the stars shine as at midnight, though it ought to be day, carries him off at once to the presence of the Sun, with whom he discourses as follows:—

*Sol.* Pardon, Copernicus, if I cannot ask you to sit down, for we have no seats here; but we can soon despatch our business. You have heard from my servant the nature of it, and I, on my part, from all that I hear of you, believe that you are exactly the person whom I require.

*Copernicus.* Signore, I see great difficulty in the business.

*Sol.* Difficulty ought not to discourage such a man as you are, and it is a common saying that to the bold courage is given. But, to be particular, what are these difficulties?

*Copernicus.* First of all, great as is the power of philosophy, I cannot assure myself that it is so great as to be able to persuade the Earth to run a daily race instead of sitting quietly doing nothing, to give up her easy life, and take a great deal of trouble upon her, especially in these days, which are not heroic.

*Sol.* If you cannot persuade her to do it, you must compel her.

*Copernicus.* Willingly, Illustrissimo, if I were a Hercules, or even an Orlando, and not a poor canon of Varmia,

*Sol.* What has that to do with it? Are we not told of one of your ancient mathematicians who said that if he could find a place outside of the world where there was standing ground, he could move heaven and earth? But you have nothing to do with heaven; and here you are in a place outside of the earth, so that unless you are much less powerful than the ancients, the only thing that is wanting is the will to move it.

*Copernicus.* Signor mio, it might be done; but first we must have a lever which would require to be so long that neither I, nor even your illustrious lordship, rich though you are, could supply half what is wanted for the cost of the material and the manufacture. There is another difficulty still more serious—in short, there are a knot of difficulties. The Earth up to the present time has held the chief seat in the world—that is to say, the middle: and (as you know) she has remained motionless, and with nothing to do but to look round her and watch all the other globes of the universe—the great as well as the small, the most splendid as well as the dimmest—turning round continually, above and below, and on either side, with a hurry, a fuss, a fury, which it makes one giddy to think of. And thus everything had the air of being employed in her service, the whole universe appearing like a court in which Earth sat as on a throne, with the other worlds around her, like courtiers, guards, and servants, one having one office, and another another; so that, in fact, the Earth has always believed herself to be the empress of the world; and things being as they have been in the past, it is impossible to say that she judged wrongly, although I do not deny that her idea was ill-founded. What shall I say, then, of men who, believing themselves (as we have always believed ourselves) more than the first and principal of earthly things, each one of us, though clothed in rags, and with nothing but a morsel of hard bread to gnaw, holding himself certainly an emperor—not, let us say, of Constantinople, or of Germany, or of half the earth, as were the Roman emperors—but an emperor of the universe, an emperor of the sun, the planets, all the stars visible and invisible, indeed the final cause of the stars, the planets, of your illustrious lordship yourself, and of all things. But if it is decided now that the Earth must rise up from her seat in the centre of the world, that she must rush on, revolve, and lose her breath, exactly the same, neither less nor more, than all the other worlds have done heretofore—in short, that she should become of the number of the planets: this will give such a blow to her terrestrial majesty, and to their human supremacy, that their throne will have to be abandoned and the empire given up, and the human race will be left then with their rags and their misery. . . . The business is not so simply material as it seems to be at the first glance. . . .

*Sol.* My son, these things don't alarm me. . . . Let men content themselves to be what they are, and if that does not please them, let them go on reasoning to ruin, and arguing in the face of evidence, as they can do so easily, and so continue to think themselves whatever they please—barons, or dukes, or emperors, or any other rank they will. . . .

*Copernicus.* Let us leave the question of the Earth and men. Consider, then, *Illustrissimo*, what it is reasonable to expect in the other planets. When they see the Earth doing as they do, and become one of them, it is not likely that they will be content to remain as smooth, as simple, as unadorned, as sad and vacant as they have always been, and that Earth alone should have so many ornaments. They, too, will insist on having their rivers, their seas, their mountains, their plants; and along with these still greater things, their animals and inhabitants, seeing no reason why they should be less than the Earth in anything. And this will make another extraordinary revolution in the world.

Thus the argument goes on. When he has produced every plea he can to persuade the weary monarch of the skies against the novel turn which he has resolved to give to affairs, Copernicus ends by accepting the



commission with one last condition, "That I should not be burnt alive for it, like the phoenix ; for if that happened, I should not be sure of coming to life again from my ashes, like that bird, and should never more see from this hour the face of your lordship." To this the Illustrissimo makes the wise answer, "If you would be safe, adopt this plan : dedicate the book which you shall write on the subject to the Pope."

This is serious enough in its visionary, poetic fooling, but it is mirth itself in comparison with almost all that surrounds it. We have not room to quote, as we had intended, the beautiful dialogue between Tasso and his good genius, in which that benevolent spirit attempts to console the poet in prison by representing to him that to see his beloved in imagination is actually better than to see her in fact, since imagination clothes her with excellences beyond the reach of flesh and blood. "Who-soever consents to live will find nothing in life so good as dreaming." "The only difference between dreaming and having, is, that the dream is more beautiful and sweet than the thing can ever be." Such is the burden of Leopardi's least melancholy work. Over almost all the rest hangs a far deeper gloom of despair and perpetual pain. Fortunately this is not a kind of creed which the general mind is ever likely to take to ; but the fantastic and visionary dogmatism of the poet, and the fond faith which is hidden all unawares behind those demonstrations of indignant unbelief, make one of the most curious of literary studies. A strain all monotone, yet trembling with suggestions of melody never fully developed—a dull and cloudy day, upon which at any moment the most glorious sunshine might still burst. Such are the images which occur to us, in contemplation of the life and poetry of this noble and melancholy Italian. He had hard measure in his life, harder measure still in the harsh compulsion which left him no hope for another life, and but poor compensation even from that judgment of posterity, which is all so many great writers have to console them for many sorrows. But Leopardi's sorrows have all been over for forty years or so, and live now only in the record of his wonder and astonishment, in his melancholy indignation, in the thrill of resentment with which he tells us of them. Death, which he appealed to so eagerly as the only good, becomes to us more and more a veiled and tremulous mystery as we look at it through his eager eyes. What has it brought to the unhappy poet ? it is in vain he tells us that he expected nothing from it. But no answer comes from behind that veil.

## The Rose of Death: a Fantasy.

By JULIAN HAWTHORNE.

NOT far from where I live, though wholly hidden from the common view by the lofty shrubbery which hems it in on every side, stands a remarkably picturesque country-house, built of red brick, mellowed by time, and in the fashion of its architecture suggesting the Elizabethan period. Its wide, roomy veranda, however, must have been an addition later by some hundreds of years than the main body of the edifice; it overlooked a spacious and beautiful garden, full of trees, bushes, flowers, shrubs, and quiet winding paths stealing hither and thither between the beds and grassplots. At the further extremity of this garden there was a door in the high brick wall, opening on a private lane which communicated with the high road. It was by this door that the denizens and more particular friends of the house had access to it; the front entrance, with its long, winding drive, was used only for ceremony.

About half-way down the garden there was a quaint, fantastic summer-house, built of the unbarked boughs of trees, with arched Gothic windows and a conical thatched roof. The principal product of this garden was roses; something in the soil and atmosphere of the place seemed peculiarly to favour them, and they were by far the finest in the neighbourhood. In the Midsummer evenings a gentle, powerful fragrance would rise and float in the rich air, and be wafted sumptuously around, until you were ready to believe that the soul had forsaken all the other senses and concentrated herself in the nose. And doubtless some of the most ineffaceable impressions received by our minds are conveyed through the medium of the olfactories. I cannot now remember, for example, whether the hollyhocks in this garden were planted along its western or its eastern wall, or whether the windows which opened upon the veranda had four panes or eight; but the marvellous fragrance of those royal roses I never shall or can forget.

It is now some ten years since the house was tenanted by a venerable maiden lady, Miss Deborah Ormsby, an exceedingly wealthy old personage, but reserved and eccentric; and with her lived her niece Nora, an orphan whose parents had lately died in India, where she was born. There was a strange fascination about this young lady—not an intellectual fascination, or one consciously exercised in any way, yet such that young and old, gentle and simple, loved her as soon as they saw her, and found their affection ripen with acquaintance. She was not an especially clever

girl, nor strikingly pretty; but there was in her soft grey, almond-shaped eyes a Proserpine-like drowsiness of expression, and about her rather full but finely curved mouth an innocence and childlikeness, which were more winning than beautiful. In strong contrast with this childlike aspect was the full-rounded, tapering completeness of Nora's figure—an arm and bust like a goddess's, and a hand exquisitely formed, and soft as the petal of the sweetest rose in her garden. Notwithstanding this tender fulness of womanly development, however, she was a girl of most delicate and sensitive organisation, insomuch that an indisposition of a few days, or any trifling worry or anxiety of mind, would seem to melt the flesh from her bones as a strong sun melts the snow. Probably this wondrous delicacy was a consequence of her tropical birth and bringing up; but in truth she never seemed to take hold of life in the physical sense as other women did. Her nature was, I think, wholly sensuous and emotional, in a pure and innocent way, and whatever shocked her mind made instant havoc with her body. On the other hand, such pleasures as she valued—such, that is, as appealed to her natural affections and to her intuitive perception of the beautiful—nourished and strengthened her like veritable food and wine. In short, she was the most remarkable example of an absolute—I had almost said—identity of that which we know as body with that which we call soul that I have ever seen.

Nora had not resided long with her aunt before the eligible young gentlemen of the vicinity got wind of her advent, and began to manœuvre for an introduction. It was known that she would inherit Miss Ormsby's fortune; and although few people had as yet set eyes upon her, all were ready to take her personal attractions for granted. But it soon became evident that an introduction to the Ormsby heiress was to be one of the very rarest blessings incident to mankind. Old Miss Deborah turned out a perfect dragon. She was so constantly and persistently "not at home" that many persons began to believe that neither she nor Nora really existed at all; that the house was not inhabited, and that it would one day be discovered that the whole society of T—— had been made the victims of an enormous hoax.

Miss Deborah, however, probably had as strong a confidence in her own and her niece's existence as was needful for practical purposes. She was exclusive; she had her crotchets; she understood the perils to which an heiress was exposed, and she had no intention of abandoning Nora to the vulgar solicitations of a flock of fortune-hunters. There were two young gentlemen, and two only, to whom was to be vouchsafed the singular privilege of paying their respects to the wealthy orphan. These two were Nora's cousin, Otto, a pale, gentle, low-voiced young man, of poetic temperament and aspirations, but the victim of chronic ill-health; and a certain Percy Jerrold, a *protégé* and an especial favourite of Miss Deborah; the antipodes of Otto in character, disposition, and sentiment; very handsome, very lively, very talkative, and, his enemies added, very ambitious and unscrupulous. To each of these gentlemen was given a

free pass through the garden gate, and old Allan, the gardener, was instructed to be as polite to them as his innate asperity permitted. They came often, though seldom or never appearing together, and Nora received them both with the indolent, unceremonious kindness of an inexperienced child; but before long she began to distinguish between them. Upon Otto she fixed a dreamy, half-compassionate regard, listening to his broken rhapsodies and to the expression of his vague longings, and laments over imperfect achievements, with an ineffective attempt at sympathetic comprehension that was sometimes almost pathetic; but when Jerrold came she roused herself and brightened, and opened upon him the full power of her warm grey eyes. She smiled and clapped her hands to hear him talk; she suffered him to walk arm-in-arm with her up and down the veranda; and sometimes they descended to the garden and strolled into the summer-house, where the roses peeped in at them through the Gothic windows. Nora was very happy, and so was Jerrold; she in her way and he in his.

One sultry evening Nora was sitting on the veranda, looking down the dim garden path, and hoping to hear Jerrold's quick, masterful tread, heralding his approach before the luxuriant growths permitted him to be seen. By-and-by she thought she heard the garden door open and close; and she leaned forward on the railing to catch the first glimpse of the expected guest. In a moment, however, she drew back with an expression of disappointment. Alas! it was not Jerrold—it was that tiresome Otto; yet this was not his day for coming, and she had not expected him until next week at the earliest. How very provoking! Nora really found it difficult to extend a decently cordial and cousinly welcome to him. He shook hands, and sat down near her, but she could think of nothing to say to him. She had not been looking forward to entertaining anybody, but to being entertained. Otto, with his embarrassments, and awkwardnesses, and slowness of speech, and low spirits, was just the sort of person she was not in the mood to get along with. At all events, his must be the labouring oar in the conversation; and when he had said all he wanted to, perhaps he would go away. Ah, how different was he from Percy! Percy was so amusing—and so handsome! Otto was very good, no doubt; though Nora could not quite understand how an ugly person, such as he was, could be really and essentially good; for was not goodness beautiful? and how could what is beautiful live in what is unbeautiful? It was not to be denied, of course, that inward loveliness was better than any merely outward grace; but that did not prove that the two were ever separated—quite the contrary! It was a very simple matter; all beauty was good and all ugliness was bad: if it had been otherwise, how were you to tell whether the people you met were virtuous or vicious? The world would fall into hopeless disorder at once; no one would be able to distinguish his friends from his enemies; and then the only tolerable thing left would be to die. Thus reasoned Nora from the bottomless abyss of her inexperience; while Otto sat gazing at her

through the deepening twilight, thinking how divine she was, and how unutterably he worshipped her, and how unworthy he was of her ; yet cherishing a passionate hope at the bottom of his honest and tender heart that some day, perhaps—perhaps—she would learn to love him ; not for what he was—no, indeed—but for what, in some higher life, he might conceivably become.

"What is that you have in your hand, Cousin Otto?" asked Nora, artlessly yawning as she made the languid inquiry.

"Oh—I—it's some cuttings of a rose—an Eastern rose, Nora, very beautiful and sweet. It grows in Persia : and who knows but Hafiz and Zoroaster may have smelt and loved just such roses thousands of years ago? There are no such roses here. I'm almost afraid they may not flourish in this soil. And yet I hope—in fact, I'm sure—that if you will only care for them and tend them—you alone, Nora—in memory of me—that is, I mean, out of your own kindness and love of all beautiful things—if you would take that trouble for my sake, or rather for your own sake, I'm sure they would bloom as luxuriantly as in the Vale of Cashmere itself. Oh, I should have said that I have brought these cuttings to give to you, if you would deign to accept them. They are yours, as everything beautiful is yours." Having thus stammeringly delivered himself, Otto stopped short and blushed in the extremity of embarrassment and suspense.

Nora was highly pleased ; there was nothing she loved so well as her roses, and the idea of having a new rose, rarer and more lovely than any in her garden, was particularly gratifying to her. She could not help regretting, indeed, that the present had not come from Percy rather than from poor Otto ; still, that was scarcely Otto's fault. Moreover, it was now grown so dark that she could scarcely distinguish the dusky figure of her cousin, as he sat at a short distance from her, and was consequently able to forget his painful homeliness of feature, and imagine him as good-looking as the acceptableness of his gift demanded. And really, if it were possible for Otto to separate himself from himself in such a way that only what was agreeable in him should remain visible, she might learn to like him very much ; for certainly there was something agreeable in him, somehow—somewhere—though the disagreeable was always getting in the way and spoiling it. Yes, there was something sweet and lovable in poor Otto—especially after twilight, and taking the Persian rose into consideration.

"Thank you very much," she said, warmly, reaching forward to take the plant from his trembling fingers. "I shall love it more than any flower in my garden, and I'll take care of it all myself. It shall be planted right under the southern window of the summer-house—I saw Allan digging over that bed this afternoon—and then how I shall enjoy it when I sit there in the afternoons with—" she was going to say "with Percy," but checked herself, she knew not exactly why. "Thank you very much," she repeated.

"And—and—and will you sometimes think of me when you smell it!"

"Yes, indeed I will, dear Otto; but you will be here yourself, you know."

"Oh, thanks. I don't know. The fact is, Nora," said Otto, with palpitating heart, "I had meant to say good-bye to you to-night. I thought—that is, unless you mind—I thought I would go away to-morrow."

"Go away to-morrow? Not go away altogether?"

"Yes, altogether, Nora. You see, why should I stay? I have no one here that belongs to me—except you. No one knows me or cares for me—I have no family or relations—except Aunt Deborah and you. I sit in my room alone, and try to write poetry, and to be happy with art; but I need something more than that to make me happy; and I begin to be afraid that the want of that thing that I have not will lead me some day to hate art and poetry and all abstract and ideal things, and die. I am very unhappy, and what can I do [better than go away? I will travel—the world is large enough—and by being restless in that way try to make my heart more quiet and contented. So I have made all my arrangements, and to-morrow I shall set sail."

"Oh, Otto!" exclaimed Nora, her sweet eyes filled with childish tears. Was it the tone of his voice that touched her heart, and gave her a glimpse, at last, of what her cousin really was, both in himself and for her? Certain it is that, for the moment, all his faults were forgotten, and she could remember nothing of him but his kindness and devotion, and his often beautiful and lofty thoughts, and his gentle submission to her whims and caprices; ay, many things rose in her recollection now whose worth she had not felt or cared to feel before. And he was going away? Could she spare him? Had she realised how large a part of her life was filled with him? Going away to-morrow—and she might never see him more. Going away, and leaving only these roses to recall his memory. Nay, she would remember him but too well.

"Why are you unhappy, Otto?" she asked, tremulously, rising and standing before him. "Doesn't it make you happy to come here and sit with me? I know I am ignorant and dull, but—the garden is beautiful. You say you want something that you have not got. Tell me what it is; is it anything that I can give you?"

"Oh, Nora!" said Otto; and there his voice choked; but she had given him hope—so at least he imagined—and, come what might, he could not now pause before he had told her all. He too rose, and came forward a step. "Nora, will you forgive me if I say what you do not like? It must be said. Oh, how I have longed to say it! I love you, Nora—darling, darling Nora! Oh, stop, don't leave me yet!" He caught her hand, and overawed her by the very vehemence of his tenderness. "It is you I want. Without you art and poetry and life and all are hateful and good for nothing. I was going away to die, Nora; for



to be away from you will be death, and yet it is worse than death to live with you and yet without you. I have loved you so long and dearly. You're so sweet and wonderful—so heavenly, darling! I am crazy to tell you this. How should you love such a poor creature as I am? But don't let that trouble you. I'm going away, you know; and it was because you asked me, Nora, that I spoke."

The constitutional awkwardness and bashfulness of poor Otto, deeply rooted as they were, were quite overmastered by the impetuous outburst of his heart's secret. He rode high on the waves of passion, and the tones of his voice, sounding from the darkness, took on something of grandeur. It shook Nora through and through; she felt her strength slipping from her. She had not known of this; had not wished it or expected it: but she felt the influence of a new power. Would she yield? She wavered: another moment must decide it.

It was at this critical moment that the servant entered the parlour, bearing the old-fashioned astral lamp, and set it down on the centre-table. Its light, falling through the open window, rested on Otto's face and figure; and, being unable to illuminate his inner man, it revealed only the ungracious but half-forgotten fact of his physical ungainliness. Nora saw and drew back. The shock was all the greater by reason of her recent inclination to the immaterial Otto—immaterial, but immortal. But she felt that if she were to free herself at all it must be at once, and on whatever pretext first offered. Otto still held her hand, and in his delirium was pressing it so as to give her pain. She forced herself to be angry with him on this account, though knowing that he would have died to save her a moment's discomfort.

"Let me go, Otto; let go my hand: you hurt me! I do not love you."

It was done; but was it well done. Might she not, in yielding, have found a rich and unexpected happiness—an elixir of life, though the phial which held it were unlovely? Her first blind impulse, when she saw his face, had been to resist, and she obeyed it; but had she been stronger or his power less; had she not felt herself subjected to a strength superior to her own, leaving her no voice between unconditional surrender and violent, headlong resistance, the issue might have been far otherwise. Be that as it may, the choice had now been made for ever.

In the pause that ensued Nora stood panting and trembling, while Otto was singularly quiet and calm. His battle had been fought and lost; but though there was a loser, there was no winner; and of the two combatants it was the loser who bore the aspect of authority and power. The thunderstorm of passion had cleared away, for a time at least, the clouds of false shame and awkwardness from his soul. He stood taller and more dignified than before, and when he spoke again both felt his mastery.

"Well, good-bye, Cousin Nora. Forgive the mistake I made; and if I may ask one other favour of you, forget the ugly and imperfect thing

that you have always associated with the thought of me. For perhaps you may sometimes have felt that underneath there was another I, with something about him not unworthy even of you—to love you. Think of that Otto when you think of me at all, and perhaps you will at last come to believe him the only real Otto—just as you would remember the perfume of a rose rather than its fading petals.”

He waited a moment; but Nora could not speak. He turned and slowly descended the steps of the veranda, and the darkness obliterated him, and a breath of tender fragrance was wafted up from the place where he had vanished. Nora was left weak and faint. She sank down in her chair, and rested her head on the railing of the veranda; then suddenly raising herself, she walked dizzily through the glass doorway into the parlour, and so up to her chamber, where she threw herself on her bed and cried, not like a heartbroken child—her childhood had passed—but like a woman. She knew that she would never see Otto again. But she had kept the Persian rose-cuttings in her hand, and the thorns had torn her finger and stained it with drops of blood. It seemed to her to be Otto's life-blood which she had shed.

Meanwhile Otto walked down the long, winding garden-path between the lines of sweet-smelling flowers that hedged him in on either side. Before he had reached the little summer-house he heard a quick, active step approaching; and a few moments later he found himself face to face with a lithe, vigorous figure, which he knew was Jerrold's. The two young men had never been on cordial terms, Jerrold's shallow but brilliant intellect being easily able to throw Otto's into the shade; while Otto, on the other hand, provoked Jerrold by a certain depth and honesty of character which he affected to ridicule, but in reality stood in some awe of. Otto was about to pass on without a word; but Jerrold, yielding to an idle impulse, laid a hand on his arm and stopped him.

“That you, Otto? Good evening, young gentleman. Where are you going in such a hurry?” questioned he, in his rapid, bantering way.

“I am going away,” replied Otto, disengaging his arm. “Good-night.”

“Going away? What, going to leave the country? Hullo, that's rather sudden, isn't it? Anything happened—any—any disappointment—eh?”

“What is that to you?” demanded Otto, nettled at the other's manner. “What do you mean by catechising me in this way, Jerrold?”

Jerrold stooped down suddenly, and peered into Otto's face; then he cast a quick, comprehensive glance at the light which gleamed through the distant parlour window. “Upon my soul, young gentleman,” said he, “I believe you have been fool enough to go and offer yourself to that girl, and, as a matter of course, to get rejected. Well, I'm sorry for you, but at the same time I must say it serves you right. What on the face of the earth—meaning no offence—do you suppose she could find to admire in you? You can't offer her money; you can't—ha, ha!—expect

her to fall in love with you on your own merits, which, great as they are, are not of the kind that captivate young ladies, even supposing them to possess hearts, which Nora certainly does not. Besides all which, I should think you would have discovered before this that I intend marrying her myself."

"You—you?" stammered Otto; "and you have just said she had no heart."

At this ingenuous speech Jerrold could not refrain from indulging in one of his peculiar silent contortions of merriment. Recovering himself promptly, as was his wont, a sentiment of compassion for the ignorance of his interlocutor came over him. He resolved to enlighten him a little, if such a callow creature were capable of enlightenment.

"It would never do, Otto," said he, "for you to travel about the world knowing so little of women as you do; and, to show you that I bear no malice, I don't mind putting you up to a point or two. All a girl like Nora cares about—and ninety-nine girls in a hundred are like Nora—is, first, plenty of money—we all want *that*—and, second, to have plenty of nonsense talked to her by some lively young fellow: to be told how nice it is to be in love; to be persuaded that he is in love with her, and then that she is in love with him; to be petted in moderation (some more, some less, according to temperament); and finally, when everything else has been tried, to drive round in a carriage to all the grand shops, buy everything that takes her fancy, rig herself out in a white veil and orange flowers, and be married in the biggest church in town. There's your woman's ideal career for you in a nutshell. And one thing more: I said Nora has no heart; and I will add to that, that all this to-do about women's hearts, and dying for love, and so on, is humbug—arrant humbug, I assure you. What women love is their dear little selves first of all; and next to that they love—loving. In a nutshell again, you see. They adore the passion—never us. We are only useful as a means to the end. So, my good Otto, whenever a woman jilts you, you may console yourself with the reflection that you have lost nothing worth having; and if she smiles upon you—for every possibility must be considered—you may remember that you have what isn't worth holding. Well, that's as much as you can dispose of for the present, I dare say; so bye-bye till next meeting."

"Wait a moment," said Otto, detaining Jerrold in his turn. "Women being as you have described them, why do you intend to marry Nora?"

"Because, goosey-goosey, Nora has money, and money is what I require; and since I cannot get the money without Nora, I take her into the bargain; not that I by any means would deny that she's a very sweet little creature, and that, so far as mere flesh and blood goes, I might easily go further and fare worse."

"Now listen to me, Jerrold," said Otto, in a particularly composed and unimpassioned tone. "You are, in the first place, the foulest and most dastardly liar that ever breathed; you are, secondly, a treacherous

and contemptible coward; and, thirdly, Percy Jerrold, you are the most degraded and infamous scoundrel that ever polluted God's earth. And I wish to God that my physical strength was equal to my loathing of you; as it is—take that!"

With the last words, and with a suddenness that took Jerrold entirely by surprise—indeed, he was already transfixed by the amazing audacity of the exordium—the puny Otto flung himself upon the tall athlete, and with clenched fist struck him so furiously in the face that he staggered backwards on a freshly-dug flower-bed, just beneath the southern window of the summer-house.

The sting of the blow relieved Jerrold of his inertia. The devil within him, never very far down in such men, was up and alert. As he recovered himself his foot struck against something hard and metallic, and at the same moment his hand came in contact with the handle of a spade. Old Allan, in a fit of forgetfulness, had left it sticking upright in the bed when he went to his supper. The devil was jubilant. In an instant the spade was caught up, whirled aloft, and brought down edge-wise with deadly force. Something fell darkly to the earth in a loose heap. Jerrold now stood alone by the summer-house window. The devil had sunk back to his lair, but an immortal horror ruled in his place.

## II.

Nora received no second call that evening, and slowly sobbed herself to sleep. Next morning she was up early, and went out into the garden to look at the bed under the summer-house window. It had evidently been freshly dug over, and there was the spade which careless Allan had left out to rust all night; it was standing upright in the moist loam. Nora reached over and pulled it out, intending to place it under cover; but after holding it a moment she dropped it with a shudder, and left it lying in the pathway. A huge worm had been cut in two by it, and the iron was smeared with the unclean creature's slimy gore. The old gardener came up at this juncture, and Nora, having sharply reprimanded him for his negligence, gave him to know her intentions regarding the planting of the Persian rose. "I shall set it out here myself this afternoon; and I wish you to understand, Allan, that no one is to have anything to do with it but myself. I shall water it, prune it, and care for it exclusively. I see," she added, "that the bed has been dug, and I suppose no more preparation will be needed?"

"Tis that puzzles me, Miss Nora," replied the old man, scratching his head. "I grant ye I left the spade out; but 'twas not I that worked this bed. Ye may go bail on that. No, miss; nor is that my ways of doing a job—spilling the earth over the garden-path like that. 'Twas no gardener dug that, I'll go bail."

"Nonsense, Allan; you are losing your memory. Who else could have done it if you did not?"

"Why, that's more'n I can tell ye, Miss Nora," said Allan, with a grim smile. "Time was when nothing went on in this garden but what I could tell the history of it; but since the mistress has got to letting gentlemen run in and out and roundabout, all hours of day and night, and liberty to do what they please, why, the garden's none of mine, nor I can't pretend to keep the run on it."

Nora said no more, for it occurred to her that possibly Otto, after leaving her last night, had, as a parting memento, prepared the earth in which she was to plant his gift. The soil, at all events, appeared to be exceedingly rich, and augured well for the prosperity of the future rose-bush. That afternoon the girl put on her gardening costume, and, with her rose in one hand and her little watering-pot and trowel in the other, she betook herself to the summer-house, and was busied in excavating a hole for the plant beneath the southern window, when Jerrold came whistling up the path. On perceiving Nora, and noting her occupation, his bearing changed, and he came up and stood over her, silent and pale. She looked up and bade him good-day.

"My God, Nora!" he said, in a low voice, "what are you about?"

"What is the matter?" asked she, in surprise. "Otto was here last night, and gave me these rose-cuttings; and I promised him that I would plant them and take care of them; and I'm keeping my promise. Poor Otto!" she added, with a sigh.

"But what are you making that hole so deep for?" he asked, in the same low tone. "Why, it's as deep as a grave—it's too deep already. For God's sake don't go any deeper!"

"As deep as a grave?" repeated Nora, and sighed again. "Well, it is a sort of grave. Poor Otto! it almost seems as if he were buried here, and I were planting these roses over his heart."

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed Jerrold, with a hoarse laugh. "Otto's off to Europe—I heard him say so yesterday. Come, Nora, let the gardener do that, and come up to the house. I've something particular to tell you. By the way, I was very sorry I couldn't come last evening, but——"

"I'm glad you didn't come," interposed Norah. "Otto was here, and I didn't wish to see any one else. You say you met him last night?"

"I? No! What are you thinking of, Nora? I never said I met him. How should I meet him? I was fifty miles away from here."

"How strange you are to-day, Percy! You said a minute ago that he told you yesterday he was going to Europe, and now you say you haven't seen him at all. What is the matter with you? Everything seems out of order to-day. Allan says this bed was dug last night, and that he's sure he didn't do it; besides that, the work was very untidy. He doesn't know what to make of it."

"Allan's an old fool," returned Jerrold, roughly. "There's nothing the matter with me, except that I was up late last night—on business.

It's you who are changed, Nora. You seem to have grown up since I saw you last; and you're as thin and white as a handkerchief."

"I feel grown up," she said, with yet another sigh; "but I've been a child long enough, I suppose. I'm sorry Otto has gone; he's as good as dead to me now; and I have behaved very foolishly and unkindly to him."

"If you go on talking at such a rate about Otto," said Jerrold, with an attempt at his usual rattling tone, "I shall begin to think I had better be off too. Now, please, my dear, kind Nora, get through with that dirty job, and come up to the house. It's awfully damp down here, and Miss Deborah will give you a precious scolding. Come, come!"

"I will come, Percy; but I must do this first, because I promised Otto I would, and I feel somehow as if he were standing here watching me. It's strange how he seems to be about this place. I wonder how it is!"

"Come, come!" repeated Jerrold, glancing nervously over his shoulder. "There, that'll do. You must have had bad dreams last night, Nora. You're full of fancies."

"You look as if you were having a bad dream now," rejoined she, rising and looking him in the face. He glanced aside and screwed his heel into the path. Nora paused to take a last survey of the rose-sprouts, as they stood upright and leafless, and covered with thorns long and needle-like. "Poor little rose-bush," murmured she; "how lonely and bare you look! But I'll water you and tend you every day for poor Otto's sake; and by-and-by you will grow large, and strong, and beautiful. And then, I hope, he will come back to see you; and then I shall tell him that I have found in him as much hidden loveliness as I have made to bloom forth from these little leafless twigs."

Here Jerrold took her arm and led her, half reluctant, away. But once out of the garden, she became more like her usual self, and again listened to him with pleasure, and smiled at his clever sallies. He had made a deep impression upon the inexperienced and imaginative girl; and although until now he had wooed her, as he confessed to Otto, chiefly as the rich heiress, from this time forth he began to find new thoughts and feelings germinating and taking root within him. The deed which he had done, all human knowledge of which was for ever buried in his breast, seemed to act as a highly fertilising property, in which these strange growths attained a rank and fervid luxuriance. But they were more luxuriant than wholesome. He that had ridiculed love, and cast a slur upon all pure and sacred feelings, now loved in his turn; but with a morbid, ravenous passion, which gave him no peace nor happiness, but consumed him inwardly, and robbed him of his insolent health and steady nerve, and made him lean, and hollow-eyed, and restless. He had heretofore prided himself upon his self-possession, his worldly wisdom, his iron resolution, his energy and clear-headedness. Now all this was changed: he was confused in mind and infirm of purpose; he committed continual follies and indiscretions, and, if rallied or called to account for



his eccentricities, would lose his temper, or stammer and prevaricate, or roughly demand to be let alone to manage his own affairs. All that he did was done feverishly, by fits and starts; his plans were distorted or short-sighted, and what he accomplished failed to satisfy him. On one point only did his purpose hold steady, clear, and consistent, and that was to win Nora to be his wife. And therein he was destined to be successful. Partly of her own inclination, partly because she saw he loved her, partly in compliance with the expressed wishes of her old aunt, who did not expect to remain much longer in this world, Nora became engaged; and when a year had passed, and no word been received from Otto, she was fain to name the marriage day. She chose the anniversary of Otto's departure. Jerrold would have entreated her to change it, had he dared; but he habitually shunned as much as possible all mention of Otto; and, with the irrational timidity of guilt, he feared to enforce his objections, lest he should incur suspicion. That day, therefore, was fixed upon, and in due time drew near. The evening previous Jerrold made his last call at the house as a bachelor, and Nora bade him accompany her on a stroll in the garden. He had little affection for the garden, but he could do nothing else than obey.

They paced slowly, arm-in-arm, along the paths; Jerrold exercising his ingenuity to lead his affianced wife away from the summer-house; she, by an inevitable attraction, as it seemed, continually tending thither. Nora, who had grown, since Otto's departure, into a grave and thoughtful young woman, more ethereal, perhaps, than before, and quite as sensitive, but with somewhat less of physical bounteousness, and very little of the childish levity and fickleness remaining, leaned meditatively on her lover's arm, and seldom spoke; but he forced a flow of spirits, and rattled on unweariedly. The ethereal incense of the flowers floated all around them; but Nora was in search of one particular perfume, and could not rest satisfied until she had found it. At length they came to the summer-house, and there she paused, and drew a long, delightful breath.

"Ah! this is what I wanted," murmured she; "this gives me life."

That bed beneath the southern window was now by far the most fertile spot in all the fertile garden. There bloomed the Persian rose. How glorious it was! Never had been seen so magnificent a bush. The little sprout of naked briar had expanded and multiplied, and sent forth leaves and branches innumerable, and was covered from bottom to top with exquisite, imperial roses. They danced and swayed gracefully on the topmost boughs; they nestled and glowed lovingly amidst the green leaves below; they peeped rosily forth from every opening and interstice; even as you looked they seemed continually to burst out into new life and beauty, and each fresh bloom to concentrate in itself all the richness of its predecessors. And as for the perfume, that was marvellous indeed. Nora bent towards the bush and inhaled it thirstily, as though it were in reality the breath of her life. As she did so colour flowed slowly into

her pale, clear cheeks, and her long, dreamy eyes opened and shone with unusual brilliancy.

Jerrold, who had withdrawn his arm and was standing at a little distance, shifting restlessly from one foot to another, his face drawn and bloodless, and his breathing laboured, fancied she had never looked nearly so fair before. But the incense that was life to her was to him the sickening odour of death.

"How sweet! how sweet!" exclaimed Nora. "Dear Cousin Otto—I have not deserved that you should be so good to me. If you were here now—but somehow," she went on, turning to Jerrold, "he always does seem here when I smell these roses. Isn't it strange? I have often felt it. It is as if he were dead, and buried beneath this window; and I think his spirit haunts the spot, and inspires the flowers with their wonderful fragrance. I could not live without it. Come into the summer-house, Percy, and let us sit down."

"No, no, Nora!" cried he, terrified at this mysterious infatuation. "I have always thought this a particularly damp and unwholesome place; and as for those roses, they make me feel positively faint. I believe they are poisonous, and ought to be rooted up and thrown away. At all events, I'm sure you ought not to sit at that window. Come away! I hate to have you here. You are never like yourself; you seem to lose all your love for me, and to escape to some place where I cannot reach you. And always talking of Otto! Do you suppose he ever thinks of you?"

"Otto is here now," said Nora, raising her eyes towards Jerrold, yet apparently seeing something beyond him. "He lives in this perfume; it is the essence of his pure and rich heart. I have never told you, Percy; but that night that he went away he told me that he loved me; but I could not love him as he wished me to then. I was not wise and good enough for him, and I did not know him as I have since learned to. So he went away, and bade me forget the Otto I had known, and remember only the Otto I could not see, for that the invisible was the only real Otto. I hardly understood him then, but I know now what he meant. And this perfume is a symbol of that invisible friend, who thus comes back to me. I wished to tell you this, Percy, before—before to-morrow; for I wish you to know everything that is in my heart."

"Do you mean to say," demanded he, biting his lips, "that you regret not having married this fellow, with his visible and invisible nonsense; and that you are going to let this poisonous odour steal away all your love for me?"

"How can you say such a thing to me, Percy?" returned Nora, fixing her eyes upon him indignantly. "All I live for is you—to be your true and loving wife. No act or thought of mine shall ever part us. Otto could never have been my husband; and I do not think he lives any longer in this world. But I believe he watches over me, and is trying to lead me to a better and higher life than I could otherwise have known. And you must not try to drive away this influence,

Percy, or cut me off from it. If you do, something sad will happen. But rather suffer it to be exercised over you also, and so make the union between us more complete and happy." "Not I!" muttered Jerrold, frowning gloomily. "It's not likely Otto wishes any good to me. You will do as you like, of course; but none of his influence for me."

Nora sighed, and they turned towards the house; but after proceeding a few steps she paused, and requested him to go back and pluck her a handful of the roses.

Reluctantly, and with almost an imprecation on his lips, he obeyed. As he stood beside the rose-bush, and its potent aroma enveloped him, his head swam and his heart sickened. Recovering himself, he hurriedly tore off blossom after blossom; when lo! blood seemed to ooze from the stems and drop on his garments. He uttered a low exclamation of horror, but the next moment burst into a laugh; the blood was not Otto's, but his own, drawn from his hands by the long, sharp thorns. He brought the flowers to Nora, who placed them in her bosom, and they resumed their walk, but not arm-in-arm as before.

The following afternoon the wedding took place. Nora stood before her mirror, whitely dressed, and looked ethereally lovely. A beauty invested her which those who had known her a year before would scarcely have believed possible. There was a faint, subdued seriousness in her manner, and her eyes had a thoughtful, introspective glance. She seemed scarcely fitted to be the bride of a mortal man.

A wreath of orange-flowers was laid ready to place upon her head; but she rejected it, and called for the roses which had been gathered yesterday. One she put in her hair, another in her bosom; but the third and most beautiful of all she held in her hand, and continually inhaled its subtle fragrance. Thus adorned, she went down, and stood with the bridegroom before a minister. But it was whispered afterwards that she scarcely seemed to be conscious of the presence of Jerrold. When she made her marriage vows she was gazing down into the glowing heart of the rose, as though she were pledging herself to that. As for Jerrold, his behaviour was incoherent and unequal. At one moment his face appeared instinct with feverish love and eagerness: then would he suddenly blanch and quiver, as though overcome by some blast of pestilential breath. Nevertheless, the only perfume perceptible in the room was the insidious sweetness exhaled by the Persian roses. Jerrold's friends shook their heads. The year had worked even more change in him than in his bride.

The wedding being over, and the guests departed, the happy couple were left to enjoy themselves amidst their roses. Poor Miss Deborah, who was failing fast, and had been carried in an invalid-chair to the parlour to witness the ceremony, now took to her bed as a permanent thing, and thus the house was as good as their own. Jerrold, however, found little pleasure or comfort in it; whichever way he turned, the

hated Persian roses met his eye. They trailed from vases and baskets, on mantel-pieces and tables; they bloomed on the dressing-table in Nora's bed-chamber; and the black oaken sideboard in the dining-room was sumptuous with their gorgeous blooms. Nor was it better at night; the flowers were indeed invisible, but their odour—trenchant yet delicate, penetrating yet impalpable—was borne on every breath of wind, or hung heavily on the still air. Nora spent much of her time in the summer-house, pondering over the great roses, as though communing with a beloved spirit. Yet, whenever Jerrold expressed a wish for her presence, she attended him with gentle wifely affection, and was always ready to lavish more tenderness upon him than he ventured to demand. But in truth he began rather to shun than seek her. Not that his love failed—on the contrary, it consumed him by night and by day—but when he tried to approach his wife some mystic influence seemed to emanate from her and drive him back. She opened her arms to receive him; she yielded him her lips to kiss; but to touch her, to feel her breath upon his cheek, caused him to flinch and mutter as though in pain. He felt that, in his own despite and hers, Nora was lost to him. Some agency whose nature he could not fathom interposed between them. And yet what need was there to suppose any supernatural power involved? The atmosphere of innocence is the hell-fire of the guilty; and the perfume of Nora's roses was but typical of that sphere of pure and heavenly affections in which she of necessity must dwell, but which he might never attain to share with her.

In her musings by the summer-house window, through which the roses thrust their lovely heads to greet her, opening out their innumerable soft petals to give her a glimpse of the golden heart within, and perchance of the secret which lay deeper yet, visions of Otto often came to her. His wish that the scent of his flowers should recall him was receiving deep fulfilment. His memory became ever more enveloped in a glorious rose-tinted halo, transfiguring the slow, awkward, homely youth into a beautiful and gracious presence. And Nora recalled the sound of his voice on that latest night, when his outward imperfections were veiled in darkness, and she thrilled once more at the utterances of his hopeless love, and at his uncomplaining farewell words.

Musing thus, tears ran quietly down Nora's cheeks and dropped into the roses which clustered below, and straightway they offered up a sweeter fragrance than ever. By-and-by she rested her head on her arms upon the window-sill, and closed her eyes. The roses bent towards her and watched her lovingly, sending forth their sweetness to encircle her as with a protecting arm. As the perception of outward things faded from her, there rose before her inner sight, in the place of the rose-bush, the semblance of a form she recognised, and yet had never known. The tender odour of the flowers was translated into the beneficent expression of a face, and for the petals she was aware of a gentle,

refined, delicately beautiful nature, through the earthly envelope of which her dim vision had never penetrated. But she now realised with self-reproach how slight and transparent had been the disguise, and understood the wrong she had done God's creations in supposing that the material husk of beauty could ever be held as hostage for the immortal worth within. This world, it was now given to her to know, was often made to seem ill-favoured and repulsive, in order that the faithful seeker after good might become strong and clear-sighted in the effort of persevering to his goal. Hereupon a most joyful smile dawned in the vision's countenance, communicating to Norah such an assurance of hope and well-being that in a flutter of happiness she awoke; and, raising her head, she looked through the window, and saw, not Otto, but her husband standing beyond.

"What makes you so happy?" he asked, in a sombre tone. "Do you know that you are dreaming over a grave?"

"That must be the reason my dreams were so bright," she answered; "for a grave is the entrance to eternity."

"Eternity, if there be such a thing, is for misery as well as happiness; and there's nothing bright for me in that. But I suppose you don't care what becomes of me after I die?"

"Oh, Percy!" said Norah, her eyes filling with tears. "Why are you so grim and wretched? What are we put into the world for but to make our choice between everlasting good and ill? If you have done evil in your life, and yet love me better than evil, why don't you turn from it and come to me?"

"Oh, ay, repent! It's easy to talk; but what is repentance, and how is it done?"

"If you live so that, looking back upon the wrong you did, it seems hateful and loathsome in itself, and not for any merely worldly reason, then you have repented."

Jerrold shook his head. "That is asking too much. Evil is not so bad that I can learn to hate it for its own sake. It would be a pleasant thing enough if we weren't punished for it. By what right am I to be punished for acting out my own nature? It is all these cursed roses! You, whom I worship, and whose love would be heaven to me—you are so steeped and impregnated in this deadly perfume that to be near you is agony almost too great to bear. Let me destroy them at once, and then there will be no more trouble." And he put forth his hand to tear the bush from the ground, fancying thus to overturn the vital law of humanity. But Nora's quiet voice arrested him.

"Destroying good cannot make good of evil," she said. "And you forget that my life is bound up in this perfume, and that unless I breathe it I cannot stay with you, my poor Percy. Root the rose-bush up, if you will; but you must bury me in the spot where it grew."

"Bury you there!" cried Jerrold, shuddering. "No, no, no." And he drew back his hand, cursing the injustice of God.



The summer passed, and cold winds began to sweep through the garden; and the flowers drooped, and their warm petals were shaken from them one by one. And now a new hope began to grow in Jerrold's breast. Why might it not happen that as the winter came on, and the roses gradually died away, Nora would imperceptibly become accustomed to their absence, and thus lose that subtle quality of life which was so poisonous to him and kept him from approaching her? And once the spell was broken, Jerrold would take good care against its ever again standing in his way. The accursed rose-bush should be burnt to ashes, and the malice of Providence so be cheated of its revenge. Accordingly he watched the red petals greedily, as one by one they fell; and, seeing that Nora still preserved her ordinary strength and health, he secretly exulted. He told himself that her dependence on the perfume had been a mere morbid notion or childish whim, which he, made morbid likewise by the consciousness of guilt, had unwisely permitted her to indulge. He would not fall into so silly an error another time. Nevertheless, one circumstance puzzled and distressed him. Although the roses were now nearly all gone; though they no longer permeated the house, and had mostly vanished from the bush itself, yet the peculiar impassable sphere which had been his barrier from the beginning enveloped her still. He could not hold her in his arms, nor rest by her side, any more than in the height of summer. How was this? Had Nora become so identified with the roses that they lived and bloomed in her, without need of external manifestation? If so, his case was hopeless indeed. Unless he tore his wife's heart out of her bosom, and flung it away, there seemed to be no remedy.

He did not know that Nora had carefully preserved every rose that had been plucked, from the earliest to the latest, putting their petals away in a locked cabinet, until a sufficient quantity had been obtained for her purpose. Then she packed them up and sent them away, and waited; and several weeks passed, during which she grew every day more pale and feeble, and her eyes brighter and more in-looking, and her voice more low and wistful. Jerrold was dismayed at heart, but he would not admit his fears even to himself. He resolutely put a good face upon the matter; and in this he was abetted by the fact, which sometimes caused him, when he was alone, to shout out and dance with an insane ebullition of selfish joy and triumph; which emboldened him to jeer and laugh at the silent token of his crime which lay so deeply hidden beneath the leaf-strewn flower-bed by the summer-house window—yes, and to scoff at and defy that God whose vengeful power he flattered himself he had at last outwitted—the fact, namely, that from week to week he was able to approach his wife more and more closely, without feeling those suffocating and agonising pangs which had heretofore so tortured and overawed him. Yes, the spell was breaking; slowly but surely she was becoming wholly his. He counted the days as they passed—the hours—and sought, by comparing the passage of time



with the moderation of his own uneasiness when in her company, to calculate the precise date at which the last lingering obstacle between them would dissolve away for ever. Slowly did he approach, step by step, feeling his way; and the nearer he came, and the higher his heart brimmed with impious exultation, the blinder grew his eyes to the spectacle of her silent, steadily advancing waste and decay. He would not—could not—see at what a price he was purchasing his unregenerate gratification. He was the same Jerrold who had done that evil deed down in the garden one dark night; the devil who had helped him there abode in him still, and found his quarters even more commodious than before. The murderer had never regretted what he had done; and, now that the dread of punishment was removed, he allowed his old hatred against Otto to return with redoubled venom. He cursed the dead body and the immortal soul; and would fain have seen them united once more, that he might a second time wreak upon his enemy the fury of his sinful wrath.

At length a day came on which, if Jerrold's calculations were correct, he might venture upon a final assertion of his power. Nora, in the extremity of her feebleness, which he persisted in looking upon as a merely temporary indisposition, had for the last week kept her room; and he, the better to enjoy his long-anticipated delight, had forborne to visit her during the latter half of this period. On this morning he rose betimes, and went out into the garden. A light snow had fallen during the night; the paths lay spotless and pure before him, and the trees and shrubs wore each a shining garment. But the only beauty that the snow had for Jerrold was the sign it gave that summer was dead, and with the summer all those influences which had stood in the way of his self-indulgence. Down the path he went towards the summer-house, leaving a trail of black footprints behind him. Arrived there, he stopped, and remained for a while gazing at the rose-bush, which now clung naked and shivering to the bleak southern window. Not a blossom, not a leaf, was left upon it—nothing but the long, slender thorns which had so lacerated Jerrold's hands. After gazing his fill, he stepped into the summer-house, and returned armed with a heavy spade—the same wherewith, eighteen months previous, he had smitten Otto through the brain. With this spade he now fell upon the rose-bush, striking and crushing it as though it had been a living foe. He did not desist until the plant was wholly beaten down and cut to pieces. Then, throwing down his weapon, he grasped the stump near the ground, and with a vigorous jerk rooted it wholly out of the earth, shook the earth from the clinging fibres, and flung it violently away. This done, he pushed the earth back into the hole with his foot, stamped it down, and betook himself homewards again with a keen appetite for his breakfast.

He ate alone, Nora having sent down word that she was still unable to get out of the room, but adding that she hoped soon to be in a better way. This addition pleased him greatly, and put him in a most gracious humour. Before breakfast was over the servant entered with a small

packet, carefully done up in white paper, tied and sealed. On examining it, Jerrold found that it was addressed to his wife, and bade the footman take it to her, and inform her at the same time that he would be with her in the course of about half an hour. "And throw open that window," he said to the man; "the air in this room seems very oppressive."

He finished his meal, rose from table, loitered a while before the fire, and at last, glancing at his watch, went upstairs and knocked at his wife's door. On entering, he was at once struck with a reminiscence, faint, yet not to be mistaken, of that fatal perfume which was the bane of his life, and which it had of late been his life's object to annihilate from off the face of the earth. Bethinking himself, however, that he had fulfilled that object to the last tittle that very morning, and smiling at the absurdity of his irrational misgiving, he advanced towards the bed on which his wife was lying, and looked in her eyes. Her aspect startled him; surely the last three days had made terrible inroads upon her. She seemed already almost a spirit; and a sudden apprehension beset Jerrold lest she might fade away and disappear even as he put forth his hand to grasp her. But she smiled so serenely upon him that he was reassured, and, in obedience to her motion, seated himself at the bedside.

"Percy," said she, in her slender, far-away voice, "I trust this morning may turn out to be the happiest of our lives. I know you love me, dear; and the dearest wish I have is to be to you all that a wife can be to her husband. I have been losing strength the last month or two; you have seen that."

"Oh, that's nothing; you'll soon be stout again. Only pluck up a little spirit, my darling, and we'll have you running about in a week."

"That will depend upon your will, Percy; my fate is at your disposal, and you are to decide this morning what it is to be, whether life or death."

"I am to decide that, am I?" cried he, laughing in astonishment. "Well, there's not much difficulty about that. I decide that you are to live, and to get well immediately; so the sooner you are up the better."

"Wait, wait," she said, regarding him wistfully. "Oh, Percy, I fear, I fear! for more than a single word is needed. You must make what will probably be a great and bitter sacrifice; at least, it will seem so at first, though in time, perhaps, if you continue good and patient, the bitterness may pass away, and hereafter God, out of His love and mercy, may change it into a blessing. Is your love for me pure and generous enough, my husband, to submit to such a trial?"

"Trials and sacrifices, Nora? What is all this new fancy? Nora, I am a man like other men; I have made you my wife, and no one, not God Himself, has any right to meddle with my rights. Any reasonable trial or sacrifice that does not interfere with them I am willing to put up with; but to expect anything more is nonsense. You don't know what you ask."

"But think, Percy," she besought, partly rising from her pillow in

the deep earnestness of her appeal; "the only alternative is to lose me altogether; and in losing me, I fear—for in this feeble state of body I seem to have acquired knowledge of secrets such as are generally revealed only beyond the grave—I fear you may endanger that which is of infinitely more value—your own immortal soul. Don't speak in that hard way of our heavenly Father, Percy; He only wills our good."

"What is this mystery, then? Out with it! I tell you I'm ready to do all a man can."

"I'll tell you, then," said Nora, sinking back on her pillow with a sigh; "and I pray God to soften and purify your heart. You remember my saying last summer, when you wished to tear up the rose-bush, that I could not long survive its destruction? When I said it, I felt inwardly that it was true; but I saw how the perfume that was my breath of life offended and troubled you; and since, for some reason that you have never confessed to me, it seemed impossible that you should ever become reconciled to it, I resolved to make the attempt to live without it, and so enable you to draw nearer to me and live with me happily and in peace. I thought that perhaps, by gradually weaning myself from my roses, I might gain the power of doing without them altogether; and I prayed every night and morning that I might succeed in my enterprise. But meanwhile, in order that, if the effort should prove vain, I might not be deprived of the means of coming back to life, in case you wanted me, I preserved all the gathered roses; and when the last had been plucked, I sent them away, for what purpose you shall know. From that day when I was wholly cut off from all access even to the faded petals, I have been dying, Percy. You did not know this; but you discovered, from that day also, that you could approach me with less repulsion than before; and you thought that the spell was gradually losing its force. But it was my life that was ebbing away; and the less of it was left the greater became your ease and enjoyment; until now, when death may be but an hour distant, you scarcely feel a trace of discomfort left."

"An hour, Nora! Dying? Can nothing be done?" cried Jerrold, springing terror-stricken to his feet.

"This is the only remedy," she answered, drawing from her bosom a small crystal phial set in gold, and containing some drops of an amber-coloured liquid. "This little bottle, my husband, contains the expressed essence of all my roses; it was for that I preserved them; and upon them my life depends. If you consent to let me breathe this fragrance, I shall regain my strength, and live perhaps many years; but remember that as surely as I recover we shall be again forced asunder, for the vital principle of my existence, as my experiment has too surely proved, is fatal to any intimate earthly union between us. Nevertheless, dearest husband, much good and happiness may be possible to us; and, above all, this sacrifice of yours will be a sure and safe sign of the repentance for the sin, whatever it be, that you have sinned against

Heaven and in God's sight. Oh, Percy, is it too much to ask? Think before you speak, for from your answer there can be no appeal." A sarcastic smile had been hovering about Jerrold's mouth during the latter part of his wife's speech. He now gave a short laugh, full of scorn and bitterness.

"I see through your tricks, madam. Otto of Roses, eh? A very pretty idea indeed! But I've had enough of this sort of foolery, and this is the way I put an end to it." He snatched the phial from her hand, and, throwing it on the floor, crushed it to fragments beneath his heel. Immediately a pungent, ethereal odour, the concentrated fragrance of the thousand roses which had combined to form those precious drops, penetrated the atmosphere of the chamber.

"And now, as to you," he continued, looking at Nora with an expression of conscious power, "you are my wife—mine, you understand; and as nothing can any longer or ever again come between us, and as I consider that I have shown quite too much forbearance already, I mean to show you that I am your husband—and a very loving and devoted husband, that's more. Come, Nora; don't be perverse. I'm not in the mood to bear tantalising. Behave as a sensible wife should, and we shall live happy without having to trouble our heads about trials, and sacrifices, and heavenly Fathers."

With these words the wretched man stooped down, clasped Nora in his arms, and kissed her repeatedly and violently. There was no refusal on her lips, neither was there any answering caress. Raising himself at length, he looked upon her; then, with a savage cry of anguish, he put his hand above her heart. She was gone. She had never felt his embrace, nor even suffered the pain of hearing his last brutal words. What time the wasted essence of the roses had exhaled upon the air Nora likewise had escaped, and had been welcomed by an expectant angel to the home of every fragrant life that has existed since time began.

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SHALL I TEACH YOU ALL THE MEANING—THE ROMANCE?"



### A Japanese Fan.

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How time flies! Have we been talking  
For an hour?  
Have we been so long imprisoned  
By the shower  
In this old oak-panelled parlour?  
Is it noon?  
Don't you think the rain is over  
Rather soon?

Since the heavy drops surprised us,  
And we fled  
Here for shelter, while it darkened  
Overhead;  
Since we leaned against the window,  
Saw the flash  
Of the lightning, heard the rolling  
Thunder crash;  
You have looked at all the treasures  
Gathered here,  
Out of other days, and countries  
Far and near;  
At those glasses, thin as bubbles,  
Opal bright—  
At the carved and slender chessmen,  
Red and white—  
At the long array of china  
Cups and plates—  
(Do you really understand them?  
Names and dates?)  
At the tapestry, where dingy  
Shepherds stand,  
Holding grim and faded damsels  
By the hand—

All the while my thoughts were busy  
    With the fan  
Lying here—bamboo and paper,  
    From Japan.  
It is nothing—very common—  
    Be it so;  
Do you wonder why I prize it—  
    Care to know?  
Shall I teach you all the meaning,  
    The romance  
Of the picture you are scorning  
    With a glance?

From Japan! I let my fancy  
    Swiftly fly;  
Now if we set sail to-morrow,  
    You and I,  
If the waves were liquid silver,  
    Fair the breeze,  
If we reached that wondrous island  
    O'er the seas,  
Should we find that every woman  
    Was so white,  
And had slender upward eyebrows  
    Black as night?  
Should we then perhaps discover  
    *Why*, out there,  
People spread a mat to rest on  
    In mid air?

Here's a lady, small of feature,  
    Narrow-eyed,  
With her hair of ebon straightness  
    Queerly tied.  
In her hand are trailing flowers  
    Rosy sweet,  
And her silken robe is muffled  
    Round her feet.  
She looks backward with a conscious  
    Kind of grace,

As she steps from off the carpet  
    Into space;  
Though she plants her foot on nothing  
    Does not fall,  
And in fact appears to heed it  
    Not at all.  
See how calmly she confronts us  
    Standing there—  
Will you say she is not lovely?  
    Do you dare?  
I will not! I honour beauty  
    Where I can,  
Here's a woman one might die for!  
    ——In Japan.

Read the passion of her lover—  
    All his soul  
Hotly poured in this fantastic  
    Little scroll.  
See him swear his love, and vengeance,  
    Read his fate—  
You don't understand the language?  
    I'll translate.

"Long ago," he says, "when summer,  
    Filled the earth  
With its beauty, with the brightness  
    Of its mirth;  
When the leafy boughs were woven  
    Far above;  
In the noonday I beheld her—  
    Her—my love!  
Oftentimes I met her, often  
    Saw her pass,  
With her dusky raiment trailing  
    On the grass.  
I would follow, would approach her,  
    Dare to speak,  
Till at last the sudden colour  
    Flushed her cheek.

"Through the sultry heat we lingered  
In the shade;  
And the fan of pictured paper  
That she swayed,  
Seemed to mark the summer's pulses,  
Soft and slow,  
And to thrill me as it wavered  
To and fro.  
For I loved her, loved her, loved her,  
And its beat  
Set my passion to a music  
Strangely sweet.

"Sunset came, and after sunset,  
When the dusk  
Filled the quiet house with shadows;  
And the musk,  
From the dim and dewy garden  
Where it grows,  
Mixed its perfume with the jasmine  
And the rose;  
When the western splendour faded,  
And the breeze  
Went its way, with good-night whispers  
Through the trees,  
Leaning out, we watched the dying  
Of the light,  
Till the bats came forth with sudden  
Ghostly flight.  
They were shadows, wheeling, flitting  
Round my joy,  
While she spoke, and while her slender  
Hands would toy  
With her fan, which, as she swayed it  
Might have been  
Fairy wand, or fitting sceptre  
For a queen.  
When she smiled at me, half pausing  
In her play,  
All the dusk of gathering twilight  
Turned to day!

"Though to talk too much of heaven  
     Is not well—  
 Though agreeable people never  
     Mention hell—  
 Yet the woman who betrayed me  
     —Whom I kissed—  
 In that bygone summer taught me  
     Both exist.  
 I was ardent, she was always  
     Wisely cool,  
 So my lady played the traitor,  
     I—the fool"—  
 Oh, your pardon ! But remember  
     If you please,  
 I'm translating—this is only  
     Japanese.

"Japanese?" you say, and eye me  
     Half in doubt;  
 Let us have the lurking question  
     Spoken out.  
*Is* all this about the lady  
     Really said  
 In that little square of writing  
     Near her head?—  
 I will answer, on my honour,  
     As I can,  
 Every syllable is written  
     On the fan.  
 Yes—and you could learn the language  
     Very soon—  
 Shall I teach you on some August  
     Afternoon?

You are wearied. There is little  
     Left to say;  
 For the disappointed hero  
     Goes his way,  
 And such pain and rapture never  
     More will know—

But he smiles—all this was over  
Long ago.

I am not a blighted being—  
Scarcely grieve—

I can laugh, make love, do most things  
But believe!

Yet the old days come back strangely  
As I stand,

With the fan she swayed so softly  
In my hand.

I can almost see her, touch her,  
Hear her voice,

Till, afraid of my own madness,  
I rejoice

That beyond my help or harming  
Is her fate—

Past the reach of passion—is it  
Love—or hate?

This is tragic! Are you laughing?  
So am I!

Let us go—the clouds have vanished  
From the sky.

You'll forget this cursed folly?  
Time it ceased,

For you do not understand me  
In the least.

You have smiled and sighed politely,  
Quite at ease,

—And my story might as well be  
Japanese!

MARGARET VELEY.

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ROGER FELT SURE THEY WERE TALKING OF HIM.

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